

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Urban and Regional Planning

**WORK, GENDER AND POWER**  
**Types of Employment and Women's Empowerment**  
**in the Family**

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## ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of the role of work in shaping – or not shaping - women's perception of their position in the family and their relationships to their husbands. Our objective is to examine the impact of two different types of informal employment on the perception of women as to their relative power in the household - in terms of access to resources and decision-making. To test the hypothesis about this impact we interviewed a sample of women market traders operating in the public markets to compare them with a group of secluded home-based producers in two poor neighbourhoods in Cairo.

The comparison covers broad aspects of the working women's lives: their work, their household arrangements and aspects of their personal autonomy. Quantitative measures are used to assess relative power *vis-à-vis* the husbands of the women.

The initial focus in this study was on the place of work, this defining the difference between the two groups of women. However, during the work, it emerged that another aspect was important: the specific social organisation of work. Women's access to and control over their earnings was also an important factor affecting their perception of their power within the household. Furthermore, all this assumes a dynamic historical context which is itself affecting gender roles and the social structure within which these households operate.

In general, the results show that the type of work has some impact on women's perception. They also indicate that women's control over their work seems to correlate closely with the degree to which, in economic activity, husband and wife work in different contexts. Those seeing themselves as least empowered work at home under the direction of their husband.

The data suggest that the effects of employment on women's perception are contradictory. To understand these contradictions and account for them we argue that it is women's perception that affected their choice of the type of work in the first place. The prior social programming, within the specific historical context of their lives and of Egypt, led to the choice of work, rather than the work on its own producing some form of social transformation.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>List of Figures and Maps</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>10</b>
1. Reda	10
2. Fatma	14
3. Cairo	18
4. The Nasser Project	21
5. Islamism and Women	24
6. Work and Gender	27
7. Chapter Overview	31
<b>CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK Gender, Informal Employment, and the Household</b>	<b>33</b>
1. Introduction	33
2. Approaches to the Informal Sector: a Background	34
2.1. The ILO Approach and Dualist Approaches	35
2.2. Petty-Commodity Production Approach	37
2.3. The Underground Economy Approach	38
3. Gender and the Informal Sector	40
4. Theoretical Approaches to the Household	47
4.1. New Household Economics Approach	49
4.2. The Bargaining Power Approach	51
4.3. Feminist Approaches to the Household	54
5. Work and Intra-Household Power Relations	57
6. Summary	64
<b>CHAPTER 3 WOMEN'S INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT IN EGYPT</b>	<b>67</b>
1. Introduction	67
2. Growth, Structural Change, and Employment (1970-90)	68
2.1. The Open Door Policy: Boom and Recession	68
2.2. Employment and the Labour Market	72
3. The Informal Sector	75
3.1. The Size of the Informal Sector	75
3.2. The Growth of the Informal Sector	76

3.3. The Characteristics of the Informal Sector	80
4. Women's Employment in the Formal/Informal Sector	82
4.1. The Formal Sector	83
4.2. The Informal Sector	87
5. Summary	90

## **CHAPTER 4 THE RESEARCH DESIGN 93**

1. Introduction	93
2. Research Objectives	94
2.1. Hypothesis	95
2.2. Measures	95
3. The Sites	97
3.1. The Neighbourhoods	98
3.2. The Markets	103
4. The Sample and Sampling	108
4.1. The Main Characteristics of the Sample	109
5. Methods of Data Collection	111
5.1. The Survey	112
5.2. In-depth Study	112

## **CHAPTER 5 THE WORK 115**

1. Introduction	115
2. Characteristics of Working Women and Their Work	117
2.1. Personal Characteristics	117
2.2. General Characteristics of Women's Work	120
3. The Working Lives of Women Petty-Traders	127
3.1. Individual Petty-Traders	128
3.2. Petty-Trading Enterprise	131
4. The Working Lives of Women Home-Based Producers	133
4.1. Women in Home-Based Production	135
4.2. Individual Women Producers	135
4.3. Piecework Production	137
4.4. The Family Enterprise	139
5. Work-Related Decision-Making	143
6. Summary	148

## **CHAPTER 6 THE HOUSEHOLD 150**

1. Introduction	150
2. Family and Marriage in Egypt	152
2.1. Women's Legal Position in the Family	153
3. Patterns of Money Management	156
3.1. The Pooling System (Common Fund)	158
3.2. The Housekeeping Allowance Pattern	162
3.3. The Separate Fund (Independent Management)	163
4. Control and Decision-Making within the Household	165
4.1. Decisions about Financial Matters	166



4.2. Control of Income	169
5. Domestic Work and Childcare Responsibility	173
5.1. Housework	173
5.2. Childcare	176
6. Summary	180
 <b>CHAPTER 7 PERCEPTION AND PERSONAL AUTONOMY</b>	 <b>182</b>
1. Introduction	182
2. Attitudes Towards Gender Roles and Work	184
3. Access to Extra-Domestic Relations	192
4. Women's View of Personal Autonomy	197
4.1. Decision-Making on Personal Matters	198
4.2. Wife Battering	205
5. Summary	210
 <b>CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION</b>	 <b>213</b>
1. Introduction	213
2. Tradition and Innovation: a Methodological Note	214
3. Women in Transitional Egypt	215
4. Work and Ideology: the Contradictions	222
5. Postscript: Home Working and Empowerment	230
 <b>APPENDIX I THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE The Scale</b>	 <b>233</b>
 <b>APPENDIX II INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS</b>	 <b>239</b>
 <b>APPENDIX III ORIGINAL FIELDWORK QUESTIONNAIRES (in Arabic)</b>	 <b>256</b>
 <b>REFERENCES</b>	 <b>280</b>

## List of Tables

Table 3.1 Annual growth of GDP and its sectors in Egypt 1970-90.....	70
Table 3.2 Aggregate employment according to major employer .....	77
Table 3.3 Size distribution of establishments and employment, private sector, 1976 and 1986....	78
Table 3.4 Gender differentials in unemployment* rates by educational attainment.....	86
Table 3.5 Women's participation in the informal sector .....	87
Table 4.1 Distribution by education in Al-Ameria .....	99
Table 4.2 Distribution by education in El-Zawia .....	102
Table 4.3 Age, education, marital status, and number of children for women in the sample .....	109
Table 4.4 Household composition of the sub-sample .....	110
Table 5.1 The age of the women in the sample by place of work.....	117
Table 5.2 Educational level of women by place of work .....	118
Table 5.3 Educational level of husband or brother by women's place of work.....	119
Table 5.4 Number of children by women's place of work .....	119
Table 5.5 Women's occupation by place of work.....	120
Table 5.6 Total household income in the sub-sample .....	126
Table 5.7 Decision-making on work-related issues .....	144
Table 6.1 Patterns of money management.....	158
Table 6.2 Decision-making about financial matters within the household .....	166
Table 6.3 Women's control over their income by place of work .....	170
Table 7.1 Decision-making on physical mobility .....	199
Table 7.2 Fertility decision-making.....	203
Table 7.3 Attitude to wife battering by women's selected background characteristics.....	207

## **List of Figures and Maps**

Map 1.1 Growth of Cairo, 1800-1977 .....	19
Map 4.1 El-Zawia El-Hamra .....	100
Map 4.2 Al-Ameria .....	101
Figure 4.1 Layout of EL-Zawia market.....	103
Figure 4.2 Location of El-Zawia market.....	105
Figure 4.3 Layout of Al-Ameria market.....	106
Figure 4.4 Location of Al-Ameria market .....	107

## GLOSSARY

<b><i>akhr el-dunia</i></b>	An Egyptian expression which means 'end of universe'
<b><i>akl el-aish</i></b>	Means of survival
<b><i>ashwaayyat</i></b>	Informal, poor settlements
<b><i>baladi</i></b>	Relating to traditional practices
<b><i>felah</i></b>	Peasant
<b><i>gallabiya</i></b>	A loose, long dress, the common dress of traditional Egyptians
<b><i>gamiyat</i></b>	Saving clubs
<b><i>gargir</i></b>	A kind of watercress
<b><i>ghafeer</i></b>	Night watchman
<b><i>infitah</i></b>	Open door policy
<b><i>kohl</i></b>	A preparation used to darken the edges of the eyelids
<b><i>qahwa</i></b>	Coffee-house
<b><i>sabi baqal</i></b>	Grocery sales assistant
<b><i>sharia</i></b>	Ismalic law
<b><i>sheikh</i></b>	An old man, the market informal leader
<b><i>souq</i></b>	Market
<b><i>sunnia</i></b>	Islamists
<b><i>tarahil</i></b>	Casual migrant workers

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Reda

An unpaved dark ally and a narrow stairway with some broken steps lead to her flat. The smell of rotting garbage outside is overwhelming.

This is in the heart of El-Zawia El-Hamra, one of the poorer areas due north east of central Cairo. The buildings are bare blocks, four or five stories high, with tiny two or three room flats, with a small area for a kitchen and washing. Sometimes the kitchen doubles as a hallway. The buildings have been poorly maintained over the years. Water and sewage leaks stain the outside walls, and much of the plaster is crumbling. A tangle of pipes and cables festoon the buildings. Between them is garbage and the overflow of sewage which gives the permanent peculiar smell to the area and supports clouds of flies. Indifferent chickens and goats wander in the heaps.

Reda is 41, but looks much older. A wisp of grey hair escapes from her *hijab*. Her dress is modest and plain, and she wears no jewellery or make up, not even *kohl* on her eyes. She is tall and thin, stooped prematurely from her endless work. She has a slightly frightened look in her eyes. She seems depressed, withdrawn, and twists her fingers as she talks. But sometimes she smiles and briefly one catches a glimpse of the young girl she must once have been.

She is a seamstress and lives in the centre of El-Zawia El-Hamra

*It's hard to remember how it was when we first came here. Then it was still the country with fields and trees and greenness everywhere. My father was always a felah (peasant) and he*

*loved it – it wasn't really the city at all. There were only about thirty houses. Of course, we had no water supply or electricity and no drainage. We fetched water on our heads from a public standpipe about 500 metres away – that was a job for us children and gave us a chance to slip out of the house and see our friends.*

She smiles at the memory of what now seems a happy time. It was the early 1960s and Egypt was booming. Egypt was rising; the Aswan Dam was to be built and other giant projects, giving people the opportunity to escape from the land.

Reda's father left his village in the Delta to settle 'in a deserted place where one might die without leaving a trace'. Her family had been desperately poor with no land. Her father worked as a casual migrant worker, *tarahil* on weeding the land and harvesting. On average, he was away from home between two weeks and three months.

When the fourth child came, Reda's father decided anything would be better than what he had, and at the same time, the economy was opening up with many new opportunities to work. He borrowed whatever he could from relatives and sold whatever they had, and on the advice of friends who had already migrated, he made a preliminary journey to Cairo. 'He was lucky', Reda said. He found the place his friends recommended on the outskirts of the city and was able to buy a small piece of land. It costs a fortune – 3 Egyptian pounds (LE) per square metre, to be paid in instalments (such land now goes for between LE1,000 and 1,500 per square metre). He built a room with a wooden roof, adding rooms as his earnings allowed.

*We children were very excited. Cairo for us was a dream we hardly dared to hope to see. But of course it wasn't really Cairo – we could hear real Cairo far away, and see the smoke haze over the buildings from afar. At night it was so dark and we were terrified to go out. There was no electricity. And indoors, we had a gas lamp.*

*My father had quite a time finding a job because he didn't know the city. But in the end, through a friend, he got a job as a*

*ghafeer (night-watchman). When that happened for the first time in our lives, the family had a steady income, and my father did not have to go away for work all the time. We thought it was heaven.*

*Of course, for my mother, not so much changed. At least, she had dad at home more than before, but otherwise she carried on as she had in the village, baking bread, doing the washing, cleaning and so on. And she kept some rabbits and chickens. We had to buy everything from the shops at Al-Waili, about half a kilometre away.*

*As soon as we settled, I went to primary school in Hadiq el-Quba. I can remember how happy I was. It used to take me an hour to walk to school, but as soon as I had friends who I could walk with, it became great, the thing I looked forward to most in the day. We also went to Hadiaq el-Quba if we got sick and had to see the doctor or buy medicines.*

*Eventually, they put in water and electricity, and although we had to pay for it, it was a great improvement. Now I could read or do homework in the evening, and my mother was very strong on me getting an education. It was about the same time that my father put on a concrete roof instead of the wooden one, so he could build an extra floor. His idea was to build a place big enough to hold my brothers when they got married – of course, we girls were expected to leave home.*

*Those were great days. The place was getting better, we were all at school. And Egypt was on top – all the great hopes we had then were focused on Nasser. He beat the British and the French and Israel over the Canal, and no one stood so tall for the Arabs then. And then he set about turning Egypt upside down – getting rid of the landlords who had been feeding off us poor country folk for centuries. Girls were going to go to school. It was a great time to be alive.*

Then in the early seventies catastrophe struck. Reda's father died when she was in her early teens.

*I didn't think I'd ever stop weeping. My father was the kindest man I ever knew. There is nobody like one's father. Of course, it was bad for the family, now we had to fend for ourselves. I had to drop out of school and start working. That was a sad day and the end of all my hopes, and of my mother's who was very keen*



*on my education. Somehow the death of Nasser and of my father meant there was no more to be hoped for.*

*My first job was helping a dressmaker. Gradually I learned to sew and be accurate. I managed to save some money, so I bought a sewing machine and started sewing clothes for the neighbours. Then a year later, I got married. He was a government clerk with a good steady income and his own house nearby. So I was really happy and thought now I had achieved something at last.*

When Reda became pregnant, her husband insisted that she stop work. But other children came – three in all - and her husband's income was too small to keep the family going. Five years after her first pregnancy, she started work again.

However, only a few years later, another catastrophe fell upon her. Her husband fell for a younger woman whom he wanted to marry.

*He had always been so religious. I couldn't believe he could do such a thing to me and the family. He could not support two families on his income. He divorced me. It would never have happened in the village – my menfolk would have protected me from such an ordeal. But now, when I told them at home, they blamed me! Saying I must have driven him out.*

*This was the worst time in all my life. I was so alone. And now with three little ones to feed. When Ali, my eldest, was eleven, he dropped out of school – I was devastated. I was not to see my children educated with better chances than myself. He worked with local grocery as Sabi Baqal (sales assistant). Together we kept things going, but it was very hard.*

Rada did not expect to marry again, and settled her life into a pattern to work hard to put her remaining children through school. The cost of living was rising then and even 'free' education was costing more and more. What made things manageable for Reda was low cost services in the area provided by the Islamists - the *Sunnia* as Reda called them- in the area (one of the many offshoots of the Muslim Brothers), but the cost of books, private tutoring (to

make up for the weakness of the public education system) and medicines was still very high.

*But then something extraordinary happened. A woman from my neighbours contacted me to say she had someone who might be interested in marrying me. He was an older man – in his fifties – and a widow, but very religious. He had a small business in garments. I thought to myself, if he was kind, there would be a father for my children.*

*He is a good man and very dutiful in his observances. But he is also, I fear, a little hard, and he did not take to my poor children. The eldest, Ali, who had a good job as a sales assistant in a store, did not get along at all with him and there is tension in the house whenever they were both in.*

*The business is better now as my husband has taken over all the management, buying and selling, and I just have to sit on the machine all day. He is very strict – but, don't get me wrong, he is very good and always means well.*

Rada's life, she feels, has ended and her hopes have died. Like her mother, the hopes of nurturing another generation who will be able to do a bit better have died. All around her, the city has grown, engulfing her world and stretching far beyond it. With the buildings have come psychological and moral transformations even more comprehensive.

## **2. Fatma**

Al-Ameria market appears always to be chaos – of sights and sounds. Trading and goods occupy every spare corner, with buyers almost tiptoeing through the produce. And the noise is deafening.

Fatma is 42 and a trader, but not an official one. Her 'spot' is outside the market, and there she sits, polishing her vegetables to make those that can, glow and catch the eye of passing buyers.

She has a strong square figure and her long black *gallabiya* is a typical *baladi* (traditional) outfit. Her face is also strong with clearly defined features, a splendid nose and bright eyes. Her skin is brown, and she looks her buyers squarely in the face without deference or timidity.

Fatma is proud to be from an old Cairene family. 'We sold cabbages to Cleopatra' she says, jokingly, blissfully unaware that that must have been in Alexandria, eight hundred years or so before the founding of even old Cairo. She grew up in Bulaq, one of the oldest quarters in Cairo, stretching along the river, north of the centre, and a busy area of packed markets, slums and mosques.

*We have markets in our blood. Both my parents lived in the market, and all my grandparents. I think I drank in the skill of trading with my mother's milk! And from the age of seven, I learned to trade – and how not to lose money! Once when I was just starting, I settled at a price with a customer which was less than what we paid for the potatoes. My mother nearly killed me! I was black and blue for days. "No daughter of mine will ever do such a thing", she said – and she was right, I never did again.*

*When I was sixteen, I got married. He was a trader too and great. We lived in a room at his family's house. But then the kids came and we didn't have enough space, so we had to move. It was hard - I love Bulaq and it broke my heart when we had to leave. But what could we do?*

*Anyway, we heard from a friend that there was a place on the edge of the city which was just starting up, lots of space to grow and no markets to speak of.*

When Fatma and her family first moved here, there were only a few State-owned factories and some housing blocks for the factory workers.

*The market you see now didn't exist then. Then it was a few stalls in the middle of nowhere – though the factory workers came in droves. Now you can't see anything except concrete, and the city doesn't stop for another ten kilometres. It was fun in those days – we were young and full of high spirits. But then the government moved in and took the market over. If only they'd left it alone!*

*Anyway, they said we all had to have licences to trade and to pay a monthly rent for a spot in the market. Well, we couldn't afford that, could we? Our turnover was no way big enough for us to live and pay for the government. So we sold off our spot in the market. My husband bought himself a cart and began selling vegetables round the area. I managed to get a place just outside the market – where I am now.*

Fatma has six children. The eldest son left school at thirteen and works in a workshop repairing machines. But he doesn't pay for anything to keep the family going – sometimes he even 'borrows' from his mother.

*He needs money so he can go out with his friends and dress properly. He ought to be saving to get married, but he isn't. I suppose we'll have to help him when the time comes, even though there's little enough for us to get by on.*

The eldest daughter is at home. She runs the household and looks after the children. Three of them are still at school, and the youngest is four.

*I am lucky to have a daughter old enough to help. My family is in Bulaq so none of them can help with the children while I work. In the old days, I had to bring them to work with me to keep an eye on them. I used even to cook in the market for them – we had a proper little house on the pavement.*

*I used to be very nervous having the children with me because the police didn't give up when licensing came in. Periodically, they crash in, and throw the baskets into the street and rough up people – it is supposed to be illegal, you see, to trade without a license. Anyway, the only thing to do is to pick up the bits and go back to your spot after each raid. After all, this is our akl el-aish (means of survival).*

Fatma has continuing problems also with her wholesalers. They give her goods to sell on credit for a limited period, at the end of which she must pay for goods from what she has sold – and that has to be done before she can get any more goods. It is a knife-edge and any failure to sell quickly can topple her into disaster – the wholesalers will not extend credit. And there are an increasing number of traders all the time –

*In the old days, there was lots of space and customers. But now you can hardly get a foot in anywhere. I only manage because I know so well what is needed to work in the souq and because I've been here a long time, I have a set of regular customers who trust me.*

The family lives on the edge – there are no reserves on which to fall back. And there's not much chance of improvement. When there is a serious illness or a child to be married, the family finances can receive a blow so powerful, the debts will go on for years afterwards.

*I want my children to eat properly and wear proper clothes. I want them to get an education so they can get decent jobs and escape all this. But daily living eats up all we earn – so getting a new pair of shoes or clothes can be a real burden.*

*My daughter has got engaged, and we have to get her ready and buy furniture for her new home. I don't know how we'll do it. We just have to scrimp and save out of piastres. And we've got our future son-in-law to do the same. By going without we'll have to manage, and we can sell some things and buy on instalments. It may take two or three years before we've got enough for them to marry – it's hard on the young, having to wait so long, but what else can we do.*

*And when this one's gone, there are the others, just getting to the age when we need to spend most on them. It seems we'll have to keep working like this forever – or until we're so old, we're ready for death. Sometimes I get so tired, I wonder what it is all for.*

These two women, Reda and Fatma, are representative of the two groups of working women who are the subjects of our study, which examines the impact of modes of work on women's perception of their position within the household. The accounts portray the essential elements that shape the lives of these working women in a changing Cairo. These 'subjective' insights enrich our understanding as they provide access to some reflections and interactions of social actors directly involved in and affected by structural changes.

Furthermore, a knowledge of the particular setting in which these women live - with its unique living areas, economic realities and ideologies- is crucial for understanding the experiences these women face and the context in which they make their choices as they try to make sense of the changes in society and negotiate better future for themselves and their families.

The brief description of Cairo, local politics, and economic transformation that follows serves as an introduction to such context.

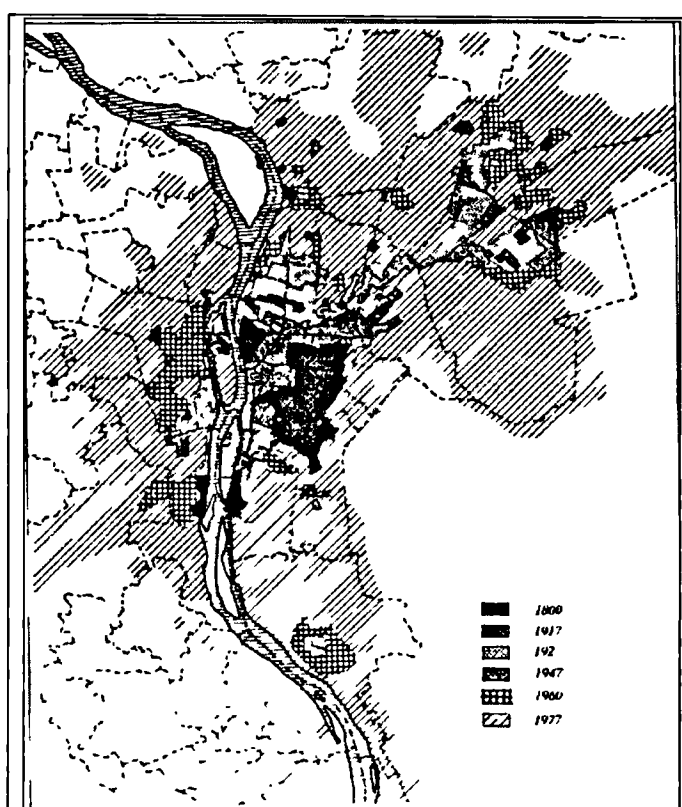
### 3. Cairo

Two lives, fragments of the experience of urban women, living through the immense turmoil of social transformation in modern Egypt, from the rise and fall of a secular modernist order, extraordinary rapid urbanisation, and the accompanying moral and psychological changes which mean that expectations, modest enough in most people, are always far ahead of what is achieved. And in the *ashwaayyat*, the poor settlements, to have survived disaster becomes a victory rather than to have made progress.

The two localities which provide universes for Rada and Fatma developed during the boom of the 1960s. They were created by government initiative – dispersing government factories to the outskirts of what was then the city and creating around them major public housing projects to relive the desperate shortage of homes. Fields of crops continued for long between the blocks, slowly being eliminated by new buildings. For many, until quite late, it remained *akhr el-dunia* ('the end of the universe'). Early settlers, like Rada and Fatma, managed without electricity, water and sewerage – a typical day was marked by the long lines of women walking to the standpipe for water, urns on their heads, a picture of village Egypt. The bus came at its closest a kilometre away, and it was even further to school or clinic. Thirty years later, the rural periphery has become deeply embedded in the city, a packed continuous residential area of half a million people.

The inhabitants are, like our two cases, either new migrants from rural areas or young nuclear families spun off by the extended families of old Cairo. The new fashion in living, husband, wife and children has become also a territorial change from old Cairo; 84 per cent of the households are nuclear families.

The two neighbourhoods are no different from hundreds of others surrounding Cairo where a majority of Cairenes now live. In thirty years, the city has grown through this means into both desert and the Nile flood plain. There were half a million Cairo citizens in 1900 and four and a half million by 1960. From that point, the city soared – to seven and half million in 1976, and ten million a decade later. The estimate now is more than 14 million.



Map 1.1 Growth of Cairo, 1800-1977

Source: Agha Khan Program (1984)

Physically, the expansion is even more dramatic. Between 1950 and 1980, the built up area doubled – from 100 to 220 square kilometres, and now some 350. The city, on the western edge of Cairo governorate, spread westwards to cover much of the western governorate of Giza and the northern Qalyubia. Townships and peripheral cities were swallowed along the way, and new settlements climbed up the Mokattam Hills, probing far into the desert, and equally far to the south and as far west as the pyramids, and as far north as to absorb the major industrial city of Shubra el-Kheima. About 60 percent of the urban area (and 70 per cent of the urban population) is within Cairo proper. At 32,000 inhabitants per square kilometre, Cairo proper has one of the highest densities in the world.

Historically, the rulers of Egypt have strived to build only on desert land, to conserve the areas of cultivation. But now the city spreads in all direction. The sea of green fields, dotted with small villages, that surrounded old Cairo, was – despite all the legal prohibitions - turned over with remarkable speed to building land. It made investment sense. Early comers – like Rada's father – made a good bargain.

Initially, it was the poor who lived on the outskirts, but over time, the new educated middle and lower middle class found themselves excluded by the high prices of the old city. They too followed the pattern of pushing the city outward.

The surge of growth which carried the city to its present size was initiated in the great projects of the Nasser period and the opportunities to escape from the countryside. The Nasser project – to build an Egyptian socialism - crumbled and was reversed by his successors. But urbanisation continued, now led by a market economy – and the great public housing blocks began to disappear in a sea of self-help settlements. So rapid was the growth, even a government with the will and resources would have found it hard to keep up with the supply of public infrastructure from paved roads, water supply and drainage, power, schools and clinics. So to the sheer social shock of transfer from village to city were added the most horrible material conditions.



#### **4. The Nasser Project**

The hopes and fears created by the processes of urbanisation which shaped the lives of Rada and Fatma were vastly exaggerated for many by the political environment. If immediate life were miserable, in a time of heroic national deeds, it might be possible to postpone much of the misery. On the other hand, a tolerable condition of life might be rendered intolerable in conditions of national demoralisation. It would be wrong to exaggerate how complete the incorporation of the Egyptian population in Nasser's project was, but in the popular account, it is perceived as a time of immense hopes. And at the time both of his attempted resignation following the 1967 defeat in the war against Israel and at the time of his death and funeral, that popular involvement was clearly demonstrated.

These were heroic days. The fact that after all the years of colonialism, Nasser was able to finally get the British out of Egypt, reclaim the Suez Canal and, stand in the face of the invasion of the British, the French and Israel, founded for him popular adulation by the mass of Arabs never seen before or since.

The triumphs came with the emergence of a 'Third World', presented in Bandung in 1955, with the new leaders of the developing countries - Nasser, Nehru, Tito and the rest - offering a way out from the Cold War. The struggle to restore the Palestinians to their land gave a dimension of idealism and self-sacrifice that today seems extraordinary.

The new order, translated into Egyptian reality, offered a new deal on the land (security of tenure and controlled rents, if not much transfer of land), an expanding State and State-owned industrial sectors with guaranteed jobs and wages, and an immense expansion in the educational and health facilities for the mass of the population.

However, the 1967 defeat in the war against Israel badly shook the legitimacy of the regime and mass faith, not so much in Nasser, but certainly in his policies. The defeat exacerbated all the vulnerabilities of the regime, strengthened the bourgeois forces opposed to it, and threw it into permanent crisis (Hinnebusch 1990:190).

The defeat came at a difficult moment for the government. For a variety of reasons the economy was in difficulties. The expense of Yemeni war (1962-67), and the waste, mismanagement, and corruption that plagued some of the schemes at home, plus the long-term nature of some of the projects, which needed more time to give returns, all contributed to Egypt's finding itself in economic crisis by 1964-65. The defeat of 1967 meant not only the burden of coping with the refugees from towns in the Suez Canal zone, the expense of rebuilding the region, and the doubling of the military budget for arms replacement but also the weakening of the Nasser government (Ahmed 1992:217).

The regime could not sustain the simultaneous drive for economic modernisation, military and political power, and mass welfare state, which Nasser promised and the Egyptians expected. Nasser erected a strong new state, but in challenging the dominant classes internally and the American-Israeli force externally, without forging his populist coalition into a strong organised political force, he left the state vulnerable to a policy transformation after his death (Hinnebusch 1990:191).

The 1970s marked the end of the attempt to build a welfare State. The expectations of upward social mobility – through free public education, public health care, subsidies for basic necessities, rent controls, the regulation of labour, and equal opportunities for women – were dashed. In 1977, when subsidies on food and energy were removed, there were riots and the army was required to put them down. Ministers were sacked, the cuts temporarily restored, and the government given a lesson on the need for better preparation.

But many people had benefited from the provisions of the 1960s and the general expansion of the economy. The expectations continued. The State encouraged women to become educated and seek jobs in an expanding public sector. The subsidised supply eased the costs of education for poor families. Thus, the ambitions of the Radas and Fatmas of their generation were enhanced by the promises of the ruling order – and the end of those promises was a component in their disillusion.

Under Sadat, the provision of public services – schools and clinics – declined. Furthermore, the quality of what remains is thought to have deteriorated – in schooling, it is now a routine for even poor parents to hire private tutors to make up for the deficiencies of the public system. Indeed, since teachers depend on income from private tutoring to compensate for their low official pay, there is some suspicion that they have a strong vested interest in the inadequacies of the public system. The decline in the public health system is manifested through long waiting lists and forcing the patient to pay for all medicines.

The old rule that graduation from middle or high school conferred a right to a job in the public sector has also gone, leaving a legion of discontented youth. Indeed, the educational system, particularly higher education, has continued to produce growing numbers of educated, apparently far beyond the capacity of the system to employ at acceptable levels of pay.

The 1970s began with the death of Nasser and ended with the collapse of his project for the secular transformation of Egypt and the signing, under the auspices of Egypt's old foe, the United States, of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace treaty of 1979. The period between those dates saw the rise or the return in strength of Islamism.

One detail in the story is the veil and the seclusion of women. In the period between the Second World War and the late 1970s, in general urban Egyptian women were not veiled and skirt lengths were the same as elsewhere in the world. In the 1980s and 1990s, this has been reversed. The veil and the

seclusion of women (as Rada was secluded in work) are threads which link these broader events, the end of the Nasser project, the rise of Islamism, to the microcosm of our two samples of poor women workers, to Rada and Fatma.

## **5. Islamism and Women**

There are obviously many factors involved in the spread in popularity of Islamist movements, and it is not the purpose of this account to go much beyond what is needed to understand the aspirations of our samples of poor women. It seems likely that the hopes inspired by the Nasser project—particularly for the education of women—were of significance for Rada and Fatma. Their destruction was not at all simply a function of the reform regime, but that did affect the prospects of their children.

Islamism is much more closely interrelated to the position of the educated—its vast expansion in the Sadat period and beyond, at the same time as what was thought of as a growing problem of educated unemployment. Sadat himself encouraged Islamists in the universities early in his period of rule as a way of countering both the left wing and Nasserist students. This gave them an immense opportunity to begin to fill the vacuum left by the failure of Nasserism and secured their domination of key faculties up to nearly the present, and later, their control of key professional associations—for example engineers, lawyers, and doctors.

The professional associations were particularly important in recruiting young educated unemployed professionals to provide low cost services in poor areas—in circumstances where public provision was in decline both in scale and quality. Thus, it is not accidental that Islamists are supported particularly among certain groups of the educated and in poorer neighbourhoods.

El-Zawia, Ein Shams, Al-Ameria, Bulaq, Imbaba, were examples of the Islamist 'liberated territories'. Here Islamists provided almost free health care

through Islamist clinics, education through mosque schools, and cheap food supplies. In some areas, Islamist businesses developed economic projects to provide jobs for the unemployed. However, these activities of the Islamists among the urban poor were very scattered and pragmatic, and so was the reciprocal support of the poor (Bayat 1998:159).

Part of the fashioning of Islamism has been clashes with Christian Copts – particularly endemic in some of the strongholds of Islamist terrorist groups in Upper Egypt. In Rada's neighbourhood, El-Zawia El-Hamra, for example, in the summer of 1981, a dispute over land between Muslim and Coptic claimants developed into a major confrontation with some deaths and many injured. The security forces occupied the area and instituted a curfew. Similar sectarian intolerance marked the Islamists through the 1980s and 1990s, with attacks on Coptic individuals, houses and churches.

However, not all the Islamists openly advocate violence against Egyptian Copts. While all political Islamists share the ultimate goal of establishing an 'Islamic' state where *Sharia* is strictly applied, and the promise that prosperity will prevail once this goal is achieved, they pursue different strategies. One strategy can be described as gradualist and moderate, seeking to persuade the majority of Egyptians -or the existing regime- to espouse the Islamic cause. A second, more militant, strategy tends towards the use of armed struggle in the hope of overthrowing the existing order and establishing the Islamic state in its place. A third type is willing to use force against society itself accusing it of being Muslim in name only but following practices that undermine Islamic values (El-Sayed 1990:225).

In its turn, the state nurtured its own version of Islamism to undermine the popularity of political Islamic movements. The 'official' Islam, which shuns all political action and lends legitimacy to state policies, prospered through increased share in the media and more control over cultural and academic domains.

The most striking expression of the spread of Islamism has been in the dress of women. Islamists have to some degree restored the idea of women as the vessels of male honour, and therefore to be secluded against possible violation. There is of course profound tension between this aim and the demands made on women in a modern society including employment in public places, a tension exhibited in the extraordinary variety of styles of clothing and head covering in urban Egypt. This is especially so since in recent history the veil is associated with rural life, with female backwardness and illiteracy, and thus rejected by urban women.

Several arguments were put forward to explain the spread of veiling from the seventies onward. Partly, it was seen as asserting cultural identity against westernised lifestyles. For others, it was seen as a matter of convenience, which allowed women physical mobility in public spaces free of harassment of men and the disapproval of family members. It was argued that veiling of working women addressed their concern with retaining respectability although this seems to be a class-specific response.

As the *hijab* was becoming widespread, especially among the poor, it ceased to be a matter of personal choice and it became the norm. Social pressure seems to be the major explanation behind the persistence of this phenomenon. This holds true in our two localities: El-Zawia El-Hamra and Al-Ameria, where the majority of women are veiled.

Political Islam also fed the rise of social conservatism reinforcing the traditional gender roles. The Islamic wave idealised women's family and domestic role, reassigning women to their 'proper' place: the home, and urging them out of the workplace where they had become entrenched. Nevertheless, the proportion of women joining the labour force is increasing, despite the fact that official statistics do not reflect the large number of women working in the informal sector or in domestic production.

This is not to argue that women are passive recipient of these changes, or to undermine women's choices of the paths of political activism, which use the

local prevalent ideologies and are often located within religious discourses (Afshar 1996:1).

Women's responses to Islamist movements show the impact of Islamist ideologies on the women's movement. Women's responses range from participation in the Islamist movement, to advocacy of reform within the frame of Islam, to the pursuit of a secular state and secular laws.

There are the secularist feminists who are opposed to Islamist movements, to *Sharia* laws, and to veiling as a form of social control. Then there are the Islamist feminists who are defensive of the veil, have chosen it as the symbol of Islamification, and have adopted it as the public face of their revivalist position. For them the veil is a liberating force, not an oppressive one. The veil is said to liberate women from the dictates of the fashion industry and demands of beauty myth (Afshar 1996; and Moghadam 1993).

Islamist feminists argue that by returning to the sources of Islam, they are able to re-interpret the text of the *Quran* to create an alternative, 'correct' path for women. They advocate gender *complementarity* rather than equality as a means of serving their faith and living fulfilling lives. For them, Islam demands respect for women and accommodates their different life choices (Afshar 1996). However, the Islamist notion of gender complementarity renders a quest for equality unattainable. The practical result of an Islamist struggle would be that women not only lose their right for equal treatment, but that also, in the name of protection, they lose much of their civil rights (Ahmed 1994; and Kandiyoti 1991).

## **6. Work and Gender**

This brief account of Cairo provides the context for the lives of Rada and Fatma and millions of other Egyptian women, shaping their hopes and fears and therefore, their confidence within the household and in relationship to their menfolk. The broader processes – urbanisation and the desperate

material and moral problems of poor shanty towns, economic growth and the transformation of occupations, the failure of the grand Nasser project at national liberation, these elements shape how women see themselves.

The thread of this account in the following chapters is the attempt to detect the influence of different modes of work upon a group of secluded and a group of non-secluded women. Poor women in poor areas can only with the greatest difficulty seclude themselves. They must work to sustain their families so that reconciling the demands of 'traditional' gender roles and those of economic survival becomes impossibly painful. The aspiration of their husbands to attain respected status with the right show of 'traditional' ideals – seclusion – is only possible if their incomes are high enough. Without that, the man, like the woman, is engaged in a hopeless task, since they must also conform to other imperatives of respectability – like educating their children.

However, that is not the central theme of this work but an interesting byway. This account is an examination of the role of work in shaping – or not shaping - women's perception of their role in the family and their relationships to their husbands. Do different modes of work shape perceptions of women in ways which can be detected? There has been much work and speculation on this question, but relatively few in conditions where women are being, supposedly, withdrawn from the public world, secluded (for example Beneria and Roldan 1987; and Mies 1982).

Many writers have seen work – particularly, paid employment in a collective context - as the force to liberate women (for example Sharma 1990; Tiano 1994; and Elson and Pearson 1981). Others have seen the significance of work as being determined by wider social forces which define the meaning of work at any given moment of time. There are modest claims – for example, that women gain incomes, skills, extra-domestic relationships, which allow them more confidence to challenge domestic subordination than those who are house bound (Sen 1990; Blumberg 1991; Stichter 1990; and Babb 1989).



There is a counter case, rejecting what might in some views seem an optimistic account. As women tend to be concentrated in poorly paid casual or part-time jobs, outside work imposes upon them a second burden on top of running a home, waged and domestic labour combined. Since very often women are still portrayed as *supplementary* workers – even when their financial contribution to the household has become crucial – gender relations may not be in any way affected (Walby 1990; Safa, 1990; and Whitehead 1981)

In the Egyptian context, recent contributions (for example, Hoodfar 1997; Singerman 1995; Kamphoefner 1996) push this argument to the extreme, claiming that women's employment outside the home has led to a loss of power for Egyptian women in the traditional sphere of their influence, the household.

Our aim in this study is to test some of these claims by considering the impact of two types of informal employment on women's perception of their position in the household – in terms of access to resources and decision-making, and to do so in a given historical time period and place. We selected a sample of women market traders to compare them with a group of secluded home-based producers – in terms of their perception of their degree of control within the household.

These are two microcosms of women in urban Egypt during a period of great social change. It is not feasible to hold constant all the factors at stake, but here we seek to isolate the role of work (secluded and non-secluded) upon how women see themselves in the household.

In comparing women in the two groups, we aim at clarifying the common features in their work experiences and illuminating those aspects that are related specifically to each type of work. In doing so, we can evaluate the various factors in the wider societal context that shape women's perception and their work experience. Moreover, in exploring the differences between

home-based work and petty-traders, we can isolate the unique impact of each type of work on women's perception.

Moreover, since our primary concern is to understand women's perception, a methodology allowing women's own words to emerge is clearly necessary. It allows exploration into women's own interpretations of the constraints and choices they face daily in a way not possible in large surveys, and to give different and deeper insights into the tensions and contradictions of women's position.

We have been mainly concerned with how women describe themselves, how they present themselves to an interviewer who, whatever the safeguards, will be seen as a representative of the outside official world, a moral arbiter or judge. How women present themselves is no doubt related to how they see themselves and to how they actually behave, but we have little access to these other levels of perception. At this level – how women present themselves, is only partially a matter of choice for the woman concerned. The images and ideals are presented by the wider society and are part of a prevailing ideology, itself a changing framework.

Women's accounts presented in this study contain inconsistencies and contradictions, and that is because women's perceptions may embody contradictory notions of obligation, appropriate behaviour, and legitimate expectations, thus academic analysis must complement such accounts. To understand how these accounts are constructed, how gender identities are created and negotiated, and how subjects view themselves and their actions all within a particular cultural and historical and political-economic setting (Wolf 1992: 25). Wolf further explains:

Clearly, as social scientists we are interpreters we have access to our subjects' mediated representation of themselves and can portray only our mediated understanding and representation of them as best as we can. Despite such problems with mediation, representation, and subjectivity, it is important and useful to

engage with such narratives and weave them into our attempts to understand structural change (1992:25).

## **7. Chapter Overview**

In order to understand the link between women's work and their roles in the household, gender must be placed in the centre of our analytical framework. Our framework, presented in Chapter Two, involves an understanding of a number of current problems and questions in the theoretical and empirical literature, especially those related to the relationship between women's informal employment and the household; the importance of conceptualising the household as a cooperative-conflict unit; the link between gender inequality within and outside the household; and the interaction between perceptions, ideologies and behaviour.

Labour force participation has been an important measure of women's status in a society. In Egypt, women's low rate of labour force participation as reported in the official statistics does not give an accurate picture of their involvement in the economy. Several studies show that large numbers of women engaged in the informal sector. In Chapter Three we aim at examining women's participation in the informal sector and the characteristics of their work. To do so, we outline the recent economic developments that took place in Egypt during the past two decades and their impact on employment and the growth of the informal sector.

Having set out the wider context of this study, the remaining chapters are devoted to the results of our fieldwork. In Chapter Four a detailed account of the research methods is presented.

To provide an accurate view of the impact of work on women's perceptions, Chapter Five examines the nature and organisation of women's work in the two groups. Several important factors are considered. These are: how the work is organised and whether women are working in a family enterprise or

independently; control processes defining who owns the capital, controls labour of other individuals, and distributes the profit; and the gender division of labour. The chapter also examines women's motivation for work and for choosing their current occupation, the personal characteristics and those related to the organisation of work, and finally the conditions under which the women work. Our aim is to assess women's perception of the degree of control and command they enjoy over their work.

Access to and control over monetary resources are important indicators of one's position in the household power structure. In Chapter Six we examine the extent to which women's work leads to an expansion or contraction of their access to household income. We also investigate the factors that affect women's control over their income. Several factors influence women's ability to exercise control over the disposal of their earnings. The most significant of which are the cultural norms and patterns of financial arrangements adopted in the household. The chapter also explores the effect of women's work on the household division of labour and ideology of domesticity.

In Chapter Seven we examine the broader aspects of women's perception, women's attitudes to gender roles and to gender relations, their views of their work and domestic roles and the extent to which their work has altered, modified or consolidate domestic power relations. We investigate whether factors such as access to and control over income, women's economic contribution, and access to extra-domestic relations affect the way women perceive their position in the household. Women's views of various aspects of personal autonomy such as freedom of movement, wearing the veil, fertility and wife battering are examined. Throughout our discussion we stress the importance of culture and gender ideology in shaping women's perceptions.

In Chapter Eight we draw some final conclusions, and in doing so, we step back and put our findings in the wider societal context, and attempt to make a link between the micro level of the household and the macro level of the society as a whole.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **Gender, Informal Employment, and the Household**

##### **1. Introduction**

Our study, as mentioned earlier, compares the impact of two particular types of informal employment, petty-trading (operating in public) and home-based production (operating in seclusion), on women's perception of their position in the household in terms of access to resources and decision-making. This entails examining the complex interactions between women's employment, their families and household relationships.

In our analysis we distinguish between sex and gender. The former is based on biological differences, the latter is socially constructed. Gender refers to both men and women, the socially constructed roles and responsibilities they have, and the gender relations between them in a particular historical and socio-cultural context. A key element in gender relations is the gender division of labour. It refers not only to the different tasks performed by women and men, in the household, the labour market or in community, but also to the value accorded to these activities. This affects the status of men and women in society, which in turn defines their differential access to and control over resources such as income and decision-making power (Beall 1993:1-2).

Gender has become central in examining women's employment. Incorporating gender in such analysis means to consider women's social roles in the household and community which affect their engagement in productive activities (Beall 1993). Given the different nature of women's participation in the labour market and the domestic sphere, we need to understand the

complexity of the articulation between production and reproduction to explain the gender division of labour and its impact on women's status.

Central to our investigation is the nature and organisation of women's work in the two groups and their impact on intra-household relations and women's autonomy. Thus, the analysis is extended to cover the internal dynamics of the household, expressed in the division of labour and responsibilities, and domestic budgeting. Women's role in decision-making within the household centres on issues related to their work, household arrangements and personal issues. This study can thus be seen in relation to two bodies of literature: on gender and the informal sector; and on the household economy.

The aim of this chapter is to review various aspects of these bodies of literature that are of particular relevance to our study. The chapter is divided into two broad sections. The first examines gender and the informal sector. Our aim in this section is to show why gender is an important dimension in the analysis of the informal sector. The section begins with a brief review of the main theoretical approaches to the informal sector. The second section addresses the different conceptual approaches to the household and their implications for the gender division of labour and power relations within the household.

## **2. Approaches to the Informal Sector: a Background**

The term *informal sector* was introduced by Hart in the early 1970s on the basis of his study of employment among the urban poor in Ghana. His dichotomy was based on a distinction between wage earning (formal) and self-employment (informal). The formal/informal dualism was taken up by the International Labour Office (ILO) and the report of the ILO mission to Kenya contained the first explicit use of the term (Thomas 1995:18). Since then, the term *informal sector* has become one of the central organising concepts in the publications of the ILO.

During the 1970s the informal sector debate centred on several critical issues, including, terminology, methods of study, and limitations of existing analytical techniques; whether the informal sector was half of a dichotomy or part of a continuum; and the linkages between the informal and the formal sectors (Moser 1994).

Later, the relative importance and focus of the debate changed. In the 1980s, interest shifted to understanding the phenomenon regardless of what it was called. An important change has been the shift away from seeing the expansion of the informal sector as a problem for development, to an emphasis on the informal sector as an asset or solution to problems of poverty and unemployment (Rakowski 1994:31).

## **2.1. The ILO Approach and Dualist Approaches**

The most popular and widely used definition of the informal sector in the 1970s was that of the ILO. The dichotomy of informal and formal sectors, according to this definition, was based on the characteristics of enterprises. The contrasting characteristics for formal and informal sectors were produced in a list.

The informal sector was said to consist of economic activities characterised by: ease of entry, reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership of enterprise, small scale production, labour intensive and adapted technology, skill acquired outside the formal schooling system, and operating in unregulated and competitive markets. In contrast, the formal sector consisted of the converse characteristics with difficult entry, frequent reliance on overseas resources, corporate ownership, large scale of operation, capital intensive and often imported technology, formally acquired skills, and protected markets by tariffs, and trade licenses.

The ILO Kenya Report (1972) concluded that the informal sector, as defined above, was capable of both creating more jobs and growing faster than the formal sector and that the bulk of employment in the informal sector, far from

being only marginally productive, was economically efficient and profit-making. On the basis of such recommendations, the informal sector came to be viewed by some as a solution to developing countries' problems. Policy-oriented studies increasingly advocated the direct intervention of the state in implementing reforms and fiscal measures designed to promote informal sector growth (Moser 1978:1053).

Several dualist approaches stressed other factors that are external to the characteristics of the enterprise. Some analysts viewed the dichotomy within the urban labour market, and described the informal sector as *unprotected* in contrast to the formal *protected* sector in terms of wage-levels, working conditions, and social security (Sethuraman 1976:71). Others focused on state regulations and provisions where certain rights and benefits were linked to the formal sector. In addition, a large number of those working in the informal sector were invisible to the state, in the sense that they did not register their economic activities with the authorities (Thomas 1995:27).

The informal sector model has been criticised on a number of accounts. Many empirical studies showed that markets in the informal sector were not always competitive and that barriers to entry did exist. Evidence that workers moved between the two sectors in both directions destroyed two of the core assumptions of this model, barriers to entry into the formal sector and preference of workers for formal sector employment (Scott 1994:17).

The dualist classification was simplistic since it labelled all economic activities as either formal or informal, thereby ignoring the vast area occupied by various economic activities which might be described as intermediate or transitional (Bromley 1978:1034).

The dualist perspective implicit in the informal sector concept assumed that the two sectors are autonomous. The idea of an independent sector was criticised on the basis of empirical analysis which revealed the complex networks of relations which bound the two together (Bromley 1978:1034).



Finally, while many scholars within this approach have noted that a higher proportion of women were concentrated in the informal sector, they failed to provide any explanation of this phenomenon (Heyzer 1981; and Young 1993). Scott argued that:

The lack of awareness of gender segregation, and of substantial differences in the circumstances of men and women there meant that the ideal-typical characterisation of the sector is partial (1991:127).

## **2.2. Petty-Commodity Production Approach**

Dissatisfaction with the dualist approach resulted in an alternative framework emphasising a continuum of economic activities namely that of *petty-commodity production* (PCP). This approach was based on Marx's theory of different modes of production and their mutual articulation. It sought to explain the internal dynamics of a particular form of production, the conditions necessary for its existence, and the contradictions that led to its eventual elimination, including both the social and the technical relations of production (Roldan 1985; and Moser 1978).

The vast majority of small-scale enterprises identified as informal fit into the category of *petty commodity production*, a form of production that it is said to exist at the margins of the capitalist mode of production but is integrated into and subordinate to it. The concept of PCP refers to the production of commodities without a separation between capital and labour. Petty producers have independent access to means of production, use their own labour or that of their families, and have the capacity of *self-exploitation* which enables them to provide cheap wage goods and thus to compete in capitalist markets (Scott 1994:20).

The PCP approach accounted for the full diversity and complexity of informal production. It was possible to distinguish between independent artisans producing directly for the market, quasi-dependent artisans who were reliant

on merchants for some of their input and sales, outworkers who were employed by industrial and commercial firms but worked for wages in their own homes, and small workshops that were subcontracted to larger firms (Scott 1994:20). It has been argued that each one represented different degrees of subordination of the direct producer to capital according to the social relations which characterised the production process itself, as well as the nature of the relation between producers and the market (Roldan 1985:250).

There have been several criticisms to this approach. According to Scott (1994:20), one fundamental problem in the PCP approach was its mechanical and formalist method of analysis which relied on an abstract formalisation of Marxist categories which made it impossible to test empirically.

Another theoretical weakness of this approach was that it ignored the question of gender. Although, proponents of this approach recognised the role of family relations in the reproduction of the small-scale enterprise, workshop, or home-based industrial outwork activities based on unpaid family labour, very little attention was directed to the issue of power relations and ideology in their analyses (Scott 1986; and Roldan 1985).

However, recent contributions (for example, Lem 1991; and White 1994) address these shortcomings by incorporating gender ideology and power relations into their analysis of labour processes, which govern the allocation of labour of the domestic unit in petty-commodity production. It is argued that integrating ideological concerns into the economic analysis allows us to capture contradictions and inconsistencies in social reality.

### **2.3. The Underground Economy Approach**

Proponents of the underground approach define the informal economy as a process of income-generating activities characterised by one central feature: it is

unregulated by the institutions of society in a legal and social environment in which similar activities are regulated (Castells and Portes 1989:12).

This approach rejects economic dualism and focuses on the way in which forms of production; production units, technologies and workers are integrated into local, regional and international economies. It identifies economic restructuring or crises as factors in the expansion of 'informality' and accepts the heterogeneity of the informal economy. This includes activities such as direct subsistence, small-scale production and trade and subcontracting to semi-clandestine enterprises and homeworkers. It emphasises that informality is present both in peripheral and in advanced economies. Both informal and formal activities are features of capitalism that fulfil necessary functions for the accumulation of capital.

In this approach the informal economy can be a growth economy under certain conditions. These are technological advancement, export orientation, and relative autonomy (Portes *et al.* 1989:298).

Recent contributions to this approach are relevant to our study because they highlight the significance of social and cultural factors in shaping economic development and patterns of work across societies. Thus, they allow us to understand how the gender division of labour and social power help shape particular work experiences. As Benton (1990:7) argues, economic analysis has to be extended to the cultural patterns and political attitudes that shape participants' choices about work and regulate production in the absence of state controls.

In short, there have been many disagreements over definition, which resulted in a tremendous confusion about what was meant by the *informal sector*. The term was equally used to describe individuals, households, enterprises, and activities.

In our study the *informal sector* is defined as all economic activities that, for various reasons, are officially unrecorded. Much of the economic work carried

out by women in developing countries, including those in our study, petty-trading and home-based petty-production, fall into this category.

### **3. Gender and the Informal Sector**

As we have observed above, earlier informal sector analysis ignored gender issues. Feminist criticism of such neglect gave rise to a series of studies emphasising the *informal* character of women's employment. In addition, this growth of interest in women's participation in the informal sector was linked to major economic and social changes in society in general and in women's employment in particular.

Feminist work using the informal sector paradigm came to focus on particular groups of women workers and pointed out the linkages between their jobs and their roles in the family. They also indicated that the size of female participation in certain occupations in the informal sector had been underestimated by official statistics. These studies corrected the bias inherent in previous work, which tended to focus solely on men's informal activities (Scott 1991:108).

Informed by different theoretical approaches, a number of researchers argue that lack of opportunity for women in the formal labour market, forces them to take-up self-employment as a measure of survival. This is seen as due to the selectivity of labour absorption in stable wage employment which discriminates against women, especially married ones, with few educational qualifications and skills. Thus, it is argued that the decision to enter informal employment is a response to the conditions of the labour market rather than a free choice (for example, Mitter 1994; and Heyzer 1981).

Others claim that industrial restructuring and the development of a new type of manufacturing based on subcontracting and piecework provides employers with a more flexible workforce. Empirical studies have shown the importance of female labour in these types of work arrangements in reducing labour costs (for example Beneria and Roldan 1987).

Finally, many writers argue that women's domestic responsibilities and gender ideologies are important factors affecting women's participation in specific types of income-generating activities. The need to combine paid work with childcare and domestic responsibilities, and women's exclusion from certain areas of work that are deemed culturally unsuitable push them into the informal sector (Young 1993:102).

Beneria and Roldan (1987:72) also point out that the fact that women's choices are extremely limited is not examined in the literature. They argue that while women may 'choose' to engage in certain informal activities as opposed to the formal sector, their 'choice' is constrained by their need to combine different roles and/or their husbands' opposition as well as by indirect limitations such as a lack of employment options resulting from class and gender discrimination in the society at large.

However, a gender-focused analysis of the informal sector entails examining the different characteristics of men and women in terms of opportunities, responsibilities and the constraints on their time (Thomas 1995:73). It also enables us to account for the nature of gender segregation within the informal sector and the difference between men's and women's work there (Scott 1991:109).

Research on women's labour force participation has shown evidence of extensive gender segregation in both formal and informal sectors, and significant male-female earning differentials (For example, Joekes 1987; Scott 1994; and Stichter 1990).

Gender segregation in the labour market means that women are, on the one hand, concentrated in a certain range of occupations and industries which require less skill and training. On the other hand, in every sector of the economy, they are relegated to the lowest levels of the job hierarchy and grossly under-represented in top jobs (Moser 1993; Mackintosh 1981; and Elson and

Pearson 1981). Thus, gender segregation is thought to account for much of the inequality between men and women in the labour market.

Explaining women's disadvantaged position in the labour market is usually attributed either to *supply* or *demand* factors. The *supply* factors can be traced to the different position of men and women in the family. It also refers to certain characteristics of the women (for example, age, education, and skill) and their household (for example, income levels, family size, and number of children). All these variables are seen as shaping the nature of women's work at different stages in the life cycle. Explanations of demand constraints on women's labour generally revolve around issues of discrimination by employers, the need for 'skills' in certain kinds of manual jobs, and labour legislation which may raise the costs of employing women relative to men. (Anker and Hein 1985; and Stichter 1990)

Empirical studies demonstrate that women's informal activities are usually household based or associated with their traditional domestic skills. In general, women are concentrated in certain activities, particularly in commerce, personal services, certain branches of manufacture – garment-making, food production, and sale of processed food (Brydon and Chant 1989; and Berger 1989).

In her study of the labour market in Lima, Scott (1994:57) examines the informal sector (defined as enterprises with less than five workers) and found evidence of gender segregation even within the manual workforce. Men predominate in activities such as painting, metal working, bricklaying, shoemaking, printing and glass working, while women are found in street peddling, retail selling, laundering, garment working, and shop assisting. One characteristic of this division is that men's activities showed a greater range of skill levels than those of women, which with the exception of garment manufacturing, are generally classified as unskilled.

A few studies address earning differentials between men and women in the informal sector. Their findings reveal that women earn considerably less than do men in the same occupational category.

One variable that might explain the segregation is the level of education of men and women. In general, men tend to have a higher level of education. However, vocational skills were more important in explaining levels of earnings than was formal education. These vocational skills were obtained through workplace training and apprenticeships, but women were largely excluded from such opportunities, with the exception of garment manufacturing. Segregation, whereby men and women are usually assigned different activities within the occupational category, was the most evident explanation, as male dominated activities tended to be the better paid (Thomas 1995; and Scott 1994).

By examining the characteristics of men's and women's employment in the informal sector, Scott (1991:116) argues that women's jobs were typically the unskilled and poorly paid and dead-end jobs, and this was true for both formal and informal sectors. In other words, 'formal' jobs correspond to men's jobs and 'informal' jobs correspond to women's jobs. It is in this sense that the informal sector could be portrayed as a 'female' sector, not because it was dominated by women but because it described the characteristics of female employment.

To explain gender segregation, Scott turns to the household and family relations. Gender division of labour within the household and gender ideologies played a role in differentiating men's and women's position in the labour market. Women's responsibility for childcare and domestic labour affected their availability for work outside the household. It also affected the types of jobs considered appropriate for both men and women. Socialisation within the home fed into the recruitment process within the labour market.

In the case of the informal sector, Scott (1991:125) argues that:

The family affected the entire organisation of small-scale production; which handled resource allocation in a much wider sense and designated certain activities as appropriate for men and other activities as appropriate for women.

She further explains that because the family plays a role in the organisation of the domestic economy as well as small-scale production, there is a transference of the domestic division of labour to small-scale production.

The family is also influential in defining the status of activities that are designated for men and women (their skill, commercial role and so on) thereby affecting the actual structure of informal sector activities. This partly explains why female activities such as cooking are not conceived as skilled and why the trade of dressmaking, even though skilled, is not accorded as much status as its equivalent, tailoring (Scott 1991:126).

Elson (1994) further argues that because women carry the double burden of domestic unpaid work as well as paid work producing goods and services, they are unable to compete with men in the market on equal terms. Legislation for equal pay and opportunities, and diminution of 'traditional' barriers to women working outside the home cannot by themselves free women from domestic burdens and expectations.

Gender also differentiates men's and women's personal experience of work in terms of the characteristics of their business, conditions of work, and the degree of autonomy.

For example, in developing countries, in petty-trading there tends to be considerable differences between men and women in terms of what they trade, and how they trade. Several empirical studies (for example, Young 1993; Babb 1989; Scott 1994; Bunster and Chaney 1985), show that differences between male and female traders are manifested in terms of sales lines rather than occupational title. Men are usually concentrated in the more lucrative lines which involve greater profitability, while women are clustered in the more marginal lines.

Most female sellers lack capital, thus, they are found in those areas requiring the smallest capital investment. They are completely dependent on the wholesaler who offers them goods on credit, therefore, the degree of their autonomy is



almost non-existent. This is not to say that such problems are faced only by women, as Young (1993: 86) explains, although many of the problems faced by women are also faced by men (insecurity, lack of capital, government harassment) women invariably also face additional burdens related to their reproductive roles.

The most important difference between men and women traders is their mobility. Women are prevented by their domestic duties and/or male authority from moving freely out of their houses, which means that their profits are often much less than those of men traders.

In manufacturing, women enterprises often require a small amount of capital investment in comparison to those of men. Women also experience greater difficulties than men in getting access to institutional resources of credit, savings and investment, and other information about the market. As a result, they have to rely to a greater extent than men do on local, household and kin resources (Samarasinghe 1993). However, as some studies show, they may also have great difficulty in getting hold of household resources other than those destined for immediate and familial consumption purposes. In most cultures men have easier access to household resources for personal expenditure than their wives (Moser 1993; and Greenhalgh 1991). Consequently, they may be able to invest money from the household budget in their own enterprises without question.

With the increasing pressure from the promoters of gender-sensitive development policy in many developing countries, there has been an expanding credit operations targeting women. Advocates of increasing women's access to credit argue that it represents a form of economic empowerment which can enhance women's self-confidence and status within the household, as they become providers of a valuable cash resources to the household.

Goetz and Gupta (1994:7) argue that while the expansion of credit access for women must be seen as a valuable opportunity, the limitation of this strategy for women's empowerment must be taken into consideration. Evaluations of credit programmes typically restrict themselves to analysing financial costs to the

programmes and monetary benefits to the borrower. A few evaluations assess the impact of credit on power relations of gender in the household and community.

Recent evaluations on whether these programmes can promote women's economic and social empowerment have resulted in conflicting conclusions. Some show a positive impact of credit on household outcomes such as income and asset accumulation, and individual outcomes such as employment, health, and nutrition. They also suggest that access to credit can, in and of itself, enhance women's economic contribution to the household, give them a greater sense of self-worth, and increase their decision-making power (Kabeer 1998; and Samarasinghe 1993).

Critics of credit and income-generating programmes claim that easing women's access to credit does not translate unproblematically into their control over its use. Economic empowerment, however, is not as straightforward a process; gendered power relations within the household affect the distribution and use of cash resources, and may undermine women's capacity to retain control over the way a loan is invested, or profit used (Goetz and Gupta 1994).

In their study of loan use in rural credit programmes for women in Bangladesh Goetz and Gupta (1994) highlight the negative impact of these programmes on women's empowerment. They argue that in the context of high degrees of male control over loans, women's capacity to determine the way a loan is invested or its profit used is undermined. Moreover, in the case of bad investment, women are forced to mobilise repayment funds from resources, which could otherwise have been used for consumption or saving purposes. Thus, loans to women do little to alter their subordinate position within the household.

In addition, when the loan is invested in a household enterprise it is usually the husband who controls and manages the business. In household enterprises men's control is extended to women's labour. They usually recruit their wives to work, often unpaid in many tasks. The fact that the type of work women perform in these enterprises is seen as an extension of their domestic responsibilities,

therefore, is not perceived as 'work' (Lem 1991; Goddard 1996; and White 1994).

Some scholars criticise the self-employment initiatives claiming that the emphasis on informal sector economic enhancements overlooks the structural factors that maintain the economic marginalisation of the poor. These programmes frame the problem of poverty as one of a temporary, and easily remedied, cash-flow problem, instead of one which bears on relations of inequality and their institutionalisation in broader economic, and employment policy (Goetz and Gupta 1994:6).

#### **4. Theoretical Approaches to the Household**

The importance of the household stems from the fact that it is critical for the analysis of gender roles and relations, and is usually the focal point of the gender division of labour (Brydon and Chant 1989:10).

There are problems in using the concept of *household* in empirical research. One difficulty is in arriving at a definition of the *household* that can be used in cross-cultural applications. In the literature, there is no single definition of *household* or of the relationships within it. Its usage may vary in accordance with local and cultural specificities.

Empirical studies have shown that there are wide variations in marriage and kinship systems that influence household boundaries and conjugal arrangements. Domestic arrangements vary significantly from one culture to another and from one historical period to another (Brydon and Chant 1989). They are also affected by the socio-economic contexts in which they are embedded (Moser 1993).

The household should not be conceived as a unit isolated from the social world. The misleading conceptualisation of households as autonomous units can result in marking off relations and behaviour within the household as different from

those outside it. The fact is that relationships between household members are not defined by the nature of the household itself, but by social, economic and ideological relations outside the unit (Harris 1981:139).

The feminist literature addressed many of the problems arising from using the concept of *household* in empirical research, and many of the misconceptions about families and households. The most important contribution is the conceptual distinction between *family* and *household*. Many writers demonstrate that there has been a tendency to conflate two separate concepts, that of *household*- a residential unit -and that of the *family*- a social unit based on kinship, marriage and parenthood. They argue that a distinction should be drawn between families and households, and their relation to one another should be examined. Not all members of a *family* share a common household, and not all members of a *household* are members of the same family (for example, Walby 1990; Brydon and Chant 1989; and Moore 1988).

The household is seen as an economic institution and the family is seen as an ideological concept. To consider the household as an economic unit implies that it is a unit that contains relations of production, exchange and consumption. Thus, the household is susceptible to economic analysis of its relationship to production, reproduction and accumulation. It becomes possible to talk about the operation of the so-called household economy (Lem 1991:106).

In addition, if we focus on the family as an ideological concept we isolate the ideological forces that interact with the household as an economic institution. However, the family is not merely an ideological concept, it is also where social relations are ordered on the basis of kinship. Kin ties affect social relations both within the domestic unit and beyond it (Lem 1991; Fernandez-Kelly and Garcia 1989).

Considerable disagreements have been encountered in the literature on how to conceptualise the household, especially amongst those who are silent on gender in the household economy and those who see it as a primary site of gender relations (Kabeer 1991:1). In what follows, we consider the main

theoretical approaches to the household and their implication for understanding the gender division of labour and gender relations within the household.

#### 4.1. New Household Economics Approach

Mainstream economists have hardly considered internal relations within the household. In this view, the importance of the household stems from its capacity to consume and save. In essence, this traditional view treats the household as a *black box* (Kabeer 1994). The activities of household members by which market goods are made to yield utility (i.e. satisfactions) are neglected, and real work is assumed to occur only in the market (Jaquette 1993:48).

This view has been revised in the emergence of the *New Household Economics* introduced by Becker (1965). Becker's main contribution was to integrate the production and consumption activities of the household economy and to extend the maximisation principle to its internal workings (Kabeer 1994:99).

This approach acknowledges the existence of household production in which time and market goods are combined to produce household commodities that are, in turn, immediate sources of utility. Household commodities can take a variety of forms: a made bed, a cooked meal, a disciplined child, and the like.

Becker's (1985:552) model assumes that households attempt to maximise their utility with the resources available to them. Thus, productive resources at the disposal of the household are allocated to those activities in which they are likely to make the greatest contribution.

Family labour is also allocated on this principle of comparative advantage so that each member specialises in those activities that give them the highest relative return. In Becker's analysis of marriage, the labour input of one spouse is distinguished from the labour input of the other. The two labour inputs are defined as separate factors in the production of household commodities. Where the wage of one partner exceeds the wage of the other, and the one with the

lower wage is at least as efficient in the production of household commodities for equal time input, the lower wage partner will allocate less time to the market sector and more time to household production.

According to Becker (1965:512) members who are relatively more efficient at market activities would use less of their time at consumption activities than would other members. Moreover, an increase in the relative market efficiency of any member would affect a reallocation of the time of all other members towards consumption activities in order to permit the former to spend more time at market activities. In short, the allocation of the time of any member is influenced by the opportunities open to other members.

The traditional gender division of labour within the household, in Becker's model, is explained as a rational economic response to market valuations of people's time which in turn are assumed to reflect productivity in the market. He argues that women who are primarily responsible for childcare and household activity tend to lower their earnings and affect their jobs by reducing their time in the labour force and discouraging their investment in human capital. Becker (1985:555) acknowledges that the pattern of comparative advantage, which encourages men to specialise in market production and women in household activities, is not grounded in natural attributes.

Becker considers the household, not the individual, as the decision-making unit. Households make choices about the allocation of time which maximise joint utility. In trying to explain the issue of preference aggregation, Becker resorts to the concept of the benevolent dictator who uses his power to ensure that every family member acts in the interest of the family as a whole. He assumes that because individual choices are motivated by the desire to maximise total family welfare, household members subordinate their tastes and preferences in pursuit of common goals.

One major criticism of Becker's model is its explanation of the household division of labour in terms of comparative advantage. Labour is assumed to be perfectly flexible and substitutable, with the gender division of labour between

women's household work and men's wage work legitimised as both functional and efficient for household welfare maximisation. Gender, age and status are critical determinants in differentiating the allocation of family labour between different activities. The gender division of labour not only defines reproductive work as women's work but it also segregates the productive work undertaken by men and women in both the agricultural and industrial sectors (Moser 1993:21).

Another criticism of the *New Household Economics* model is about its assumption that individual choices are motivated by the desire to maximise total family welfare. The model assumes that household tastes are historically stable and do not vary significantly with level of income, sub-culture, or society at large (Fapohunda 1988). The fundamental problem with the concept of joint utility function is that it removes the possibility of exploring conditions of unequal exchange and exploitation between family members. In particular, this is so between men and women, as they relate to decision-making and the allocation of resources (Folbre 1986).

Folbre (1986:247) further argues that:

There is something paradoxical about the juxtaposing of naked self-interest that presumably motivates efficient allocation of market resources and a perfect altruism that presumably motivates equitable allocation of family resources.

Some writers argue that the model does not provide any satisfactory explanation for women's position in the labour market, since its argument is circular. Women earn less in the market because they specialise in household production and they specialise in household production because they earn less in the labour market (Gardiner 1997:50).

## **4.2. The Bargaining Power Approach**

With growing recognition of the limits of the *New Household Economics* model to handle the dynamics of intra-household inequalities, other models have

emerged which acknowledge the role of bargaining and conflict within the household. The bargaining model assumes that preferences vary amongst family members and stipulates bargaining processes as reconciling these differences (Manser and Brown 1980:31).

Bargaining models of the household have a number of advantages over altruistic models for the study of gender relations. They accommodate greater diversity in decision-making behaviour. They do not rule out altruism but treat it as one possibility among others. They also introduce the idea of unequal power within the household, thus raising issues of conflict (Kabeer 1994:112). Thus, bargaining models challenge the traditional assumption that the household or family can be treated as an undifferentiated unit of analysis.

This model has been revised by Sen who defines the household as a domain of *cooperative conflict*. According to Sen (1984: 147), the essence of the problem is that there are many cooperative outcomes beneficial to all parties compared with non-cooperation but the different parties have conflicting interests in the choice among the set of efficient cooperative arrangements. So the problem is one of *cooperative conflict*. The bargaining process of finding a particular cooperative solution, yielding a particular distribution of benefits, is sensitive to various parameters. These include the relative power of different members of the family, the perception of personal interests in a family setting, the perception of *contributions* made by different members and any *claims* arising from these contributions.

The bargaining power of members of the household is assumed to depend on the level of well-being they could attain if household cooperation breaks down (the fallback position). The fall-back position depends on: the perceived significance of the person's contribution to household prosperity; the degree to which members identify their self-interests; and finally the ability of some members to exercise coercion, threat or violence over others. Where these different bases of power compound, as they do for men in many cultures, clearly the ability to shape and impose cooperative solutions on subordinate members of the household is immense (Kabeer 1994:110).



Outside earning can give women a better fall-back position, in some circumstances a clearer perception of her individuality and well-being, and a higher perceived contribution to the family's economic position. Women's *perceived contribution* is an important factor affecting women's bargaining power within the household. The greater visibility of remunerated, outside work is seen as a crucial factor in determining women's fallback position (Sen 1990:144).

However, according to Sen, the impact of the outside earnings of women depends also on the form of that earning. He cites Mies's research (1982) of the lacemakers of Narsapur in India whose outside work did not benefit them because they continue to be perceived as housewives both by themselves and their families. The 'invisibility' of their work weakens their ability to bargain for higher wages from their employers and for a greater share of household resources.

Kabeer (1991:12) argues that this model is a serious attempt to meet feminist criticisms of economic approaches which have ignored the power dimension of household relations. In contrast to the Beckerian model where the gender division of labour within and outside the household is assumed to be one of rational economic choice, the *cooperative conflict* model considers convention, custom and ideology as important dimensions in shaping the gender division of labour.

Kabeer (1994:127) criticises Sen for equating cooperation with production and conflict with distribution. She argues some degree of cooperation is necessary if households are to remain intact. However, it is important to investigate why conflict arises between household members and the form that such conflict takes. Detailed studies of intra-household relations suggests that, since women and men are differently positioned in relation to the division of responsibilities within the household, they are likely to have different, and conflicting priorities in production, distribution or both.

### 4.3. Feminist Approaches to the Household

Feminists have long pointed to the limitations of aggregating gendered interests and unequal power relations under a unifying notion of the household (Moore 1988; Beneria and Roldan 1987; Wolf 1992). They argue that treating the household as an undifferentiated unit ignores gender inequality within households. Moreover, it tends to separate gender dynamics at the microeconomic level from the known society-wide dimension of gender differentiation and asset distribution (Bruce and Dwyer 1988:4).

Whitehead (1981:96) further argues that there has been a tendency to separate the study of the gender division of labour within the household from that in the labour market. Consequently, the labour market is seen as the site of economic relations, while the relations within the family are seen as essentially interpersonal. A major theoretical attempt to specify linkages between the two spheres is found in the *domestic labour debate*, which emerged in the early 1970s.

Dissatisfied with the exclusion of domestic labour from the Marxist economic analysis, feminists participating in this debate aimed at finding a way to theorise the place of domestic labour within the capitalist economy. Their concern was to explore the extent to which Marxist tools of analysis could be applied or extended to encompass gender relations and to conceptualise the linkages between reproductive activities within the household and the reproduction of capitalist relations of production (Standing 1991:4).

The underlying question in this debate was how central or peripheral domestic labour was for capital, and hence for the determination of the structure of the society. There were two broad approaches. One was to argue that domestic labour subsidised capitalist production through its role in the reproduction of labour power, directly enhancing capitalist profitability (Dalla Costa 1973). The second approach was to reject the notion of subsidy but argued instead that domestic labour was essential for the reproduction of

labour power in capitalist society (Secombe 1974). This debate effectively ended in the late 1970s.

The debate was criticised on many accounts. However, the main criticism was that it ignored gender relations. It dealt with a very narrow range of issues related to the household, and an even smaller range of those associated with gender inequality, such as non-economic issues within the household (Walby 1990:72). Another shortcoming was its failure to address the question of why domestic labour was women's work. It neither explored why the gender division of labour was so persistent nor men's relationship to domestic labour (Gardiner 1997:101).

However, the significance of the *domestic labour debate* is that it was one of the rare attempts by feminists to develop a critique of economic theory. It identified the neglect of domestic labour within economics as central to the discipline's marginalisation of women (Gardiner 1997:98).

Some Marxist-feminists sought to develop an alternative analysis of domestic labour and gender relations which retained some Marxist terminology but reworked it into new feminist analytical framework. They developed an analysis of patriarchy to complement the Marxist analysis of capitalism. The new debate was concerned with exploring whether and how the concept of patriarchy could be usefully applied.

Although Marxist-feminists often used the concept of patriarchy to denote male power in general, it was also used in more specific ways that were particularly relevant to gender relations in the household. Sometimes it refers to the arrangements through which men control women's sexuality and fertility and to the organisation of human reproduction (for example, Delphy 1977; and Folbre 1983). Patriarchy was also defined to encompass social relations among men in the public sphere, which contribute to maintaining male control of female labour in the private sphere (Walby 1990).

There are different Marxist-feminist approaches to understanding the household. Approaches range from those which see gender and family determined principally at an ideological level, to those which view it primarily at an economic one (Hartman 1979). Moreover, there are those which view the family as the critical site of women's oppression (Mackintosh 1981), to those which see women's oppression stems from capitalism and not from the family (Walby1990).

Walby (1990:73) demonstrated that:

The strength of Marxist-feminist analysis of gender and production in the household is its exploration of the link with capitalism. Its weakness is the overstating of this at the expense of gender inequality itself.

Gardiner (1997:237) criticises the Marxist-feminist conceptualisation of the household. She argues that the treatment of the household by neoclassical economists' unproblematic unity conceals unfounded assumptions about gender relations. However, replacing the concept of harmonious household by the concept of equally universal and ahistorical patriarchal household ignores the historical and cultural differentiation of households.

Gardiner further argues that an approach is needed which takes into account the choices and constraints, of common and divergent interests and of differences based on class, race, culture and household composition. A feminist perspective should seek to investigate and specify the diverse social relationships that actually operate within the household and to identify more complex models of cooperative conflict.

Intra-household studies have demonstrated that conflict of interests cannot be avoided among individuals sharing a residence and domestic activities. There are often considerable imbalances in workload, and resource allocation between different individuals within the household (for example, Fapohunda 1988; Folbre 1986; Whitehead 1981; and Bruce and Dwyer 1988). Thus, whatever forms the material conflicts of interest between men and women in the household take,

they are expressions of the extent to which, despite ideology, the household is not simply a collectivity of mutually reciprocal interests (Whitehead 1981: 115).

What makes households distinctive is not that they are merely clusters of task-oriented activities that are organised in variable ways, not merely a place to live/eat/work/reproduce, but as sources of identity and social markers. They are located in structures of cultural meaning and differential power (Guyer and Peters 1987:209).

Moore (1994:88) further argues the key to understanding this two-way relationship between households and broader economic and political processes is the question of social identity. When societies produce individuals, they do not only produce biological individuals, but particular sort of persons with specific attributes in ways that are congruent with socially established patterns of power.

## **5. Work and Intra-Household Power Relations**

Bargaining models of the household open up an analytical space for considering power as a dimension of household decision-making. Thus, they offer a different angle to the study of the impact of women's work on their lives. These models suggest that women's access to waged work constitute a significant condition for an improvement in their bargaining position within the household because it improves women's fallback position and enhances their perceived contribution to the household.

Incorporating the bargaining power approach in feminist analysis shifts the attention away from the emphasis on 'value' and 'visibility' of economic contributions to the hierarchies of power relations and ideology (Kabeer 1994; Moore 1994). This new focus on power and ideology meant the recognition that the outcome of bargaining and negotiation between household members is not simply determined by economic factors, such as access to resources. Socially and historically specific views about rights, obligations, responsibilities and needs of particular individual are also as important (Moore

1994:87). The bargaining power of the individual is also affected by the cultural and political implications of membership in certain demographic groups (Folbre 1988:257).

Similarly, power relations are not necessarily manifested as observable conflicts in decision-making but rather as the operation of rules and practices which systematically favour one category of household members over the others in the allocation of resources and responsibilities. In as much as these rules and practices reflect deeply entrenched cultural values, rather than individual behavioural choices, they tend to be taken for granted by all members of the household, including those who are discriminated against (Kabeer 1995; and Komter 1989).

Several studies examining how women's work and income affected their bargaining power within the household found contradictory results (for example, Beneria and Roldan 1987; Wolf 1992; and Tiano 1994). They show that although women have gained more decision-making power in some areas, they were unable to bargain for significant change in gender relations within the home.

In her study of women factory workers in Java, Wolf (1991:141) demonstrates that women factory workers living at home with their parents, although having autonomy in the economic realm through their control over income, still operated according to certain ascribed traditional submissive, and dependent female roles within the family.

To explain these contradictory results Elson and Pearson (1981:30) point out that while women's incorporation into factory work may help to provide the material basis for their struggle against their own subordination, by itself, waged employment does not lead to the social recognition of women as breadwinners. The position of breadwinner is not only constituted purely at the economic level, but also in the process of establishing the connection of the family with the wider society.

In her study of women garment workers in Bangladesh, Kabeer (1995) also shows how women workers made effort to deny that wages had made any real difference to the balance of power within the household. They invested a great deal of emotional and practical effort in re-establishing the pre-existing hierarchies of decision-making within the household.

Kabeer (1995:32) stresses the significance of the cultural and social context in shaping the impact of earning opportunities on women's lives. She argues that in Bangladesh a striking feature of gender subordination is the extent to which women rely on male protection as much as they rely on male provision. Throughout their lives, women are meant to be under the protection of a male guardian, a father, brother, husband, or son. This generalised insecurity forces women to choose not to exercise control over incomes, let alone make choices which could threaten the established norms and practices of male privilege within the household.

Women's entry into waged employment has very different social connotations for women because of the 'public-private divide'. How acceptable it is for women to operate outside the confines of the household varies considerably in different cultural contexts (Kabeer 1995:3).

In the same token, especially in Islamic societies, women's withdrawal from public forms of activity as soon as they can afford to, and their choice to work instead within the confines of their homes becomes understandable. Kabeer (1998:54) argues that gender and class relations are inseparable in the lives of men and women and can impose trade-offs, which are determined by social, rather than economic, considerations. The notions of 'seclusion' and 'visibility' of women are closely interwoven with local understanding of class social status and gender propriety. Her findings show that women exclude themselves from the market because of what people say rather than what men do, and they will continue to do so as long as such activity is associated with poverty and lack of choice.

Papanek (1971:522) further argues that seclusion of women seems to be common among members of the lower-middle class families, even though these families cannot actually afford to do without additional income. But seclusion, in these societies, may function as a signal of status, especially for persons who have just achieved this class level. Thus, the major reason why women opt for some or other form of seclusion, including veiling, is both to signal their enhanced social standing within their community and to differentiate themselves from lower-status women who do not have this choice.

This leads us to the role of women's perception of their position within the household, and the role of gender ideology in shaping that perception. Sen (1990:127) argues that deprived groups, including women, may be habituated to inequality, may be unaware of the possibilities of social change, and may well be willing to accept the legitimacy of the established order. Women's perception may embody highly contradictory notions of rights, obligations, appropriate behaviour, and legitimate expectations.

The socially established differences between people are largely based on normative understandings and practices which are linked to accepted power differences and ideologies. People negotiate and bargain within the household under these terms. Women for example, may have the right to pool their resources within the household, but their ability to exercise those rights are determined by cultural and normative understandings associated with dominant gender ideologies (Moore 1994:91).

However, this does not imply that women are passive victims or do not have any form of self-awareness. Implicit in the bargaining power approach is the recognition of women's role in bargaining and negotiations (Wolf 1992). The consideration of women's capacity to achieve a degree of articulation of their interest and acquire the means to act in their furtherance invoke the notions of subjectivity in ways that presupposes implicit, and often contradictory, assumptions about personhood (Kandiyoti 1998).



Many feminists reject the notion that women have an inadequate apprehension of their own interest, of their own needs and rights (for example Kabeer 1998; and Kandiyoti 1998). In those accounts women are portrayed as rational beings with an adequate developed sense of where their self-interests lie. External constraints on women's ability to act on their interests are seen as more important than their perception of these interests, in explaining intra-household gender inequality. Even instances where women appear to sacrifice their interests for the benefit of their families could be reinterpreted as an investment towards their future security.

To avoid extreme images of women either as autonomous or as completely passive individuals, according to Wolf (1992:23), the concept of female agency offers a broader continuum in which the contradictions of a situation can be presented, and provides a subject-focused orientation based on practice rather than attributes. Agency is not synonymous with activity; it can involve passivity, accommodation, and withdrawal as much as defiance and resistance.

Resistance and complicity are not only types of agency, they are also forms of subjectivity; and as types of agency and as forms of subjectivity they are affected by structures of difference based on gender, race, ethnicity and so on (Moore 1994:50).

Moore further argues that femininity and masculinity cannot be taken as singular, fixed features, which are exclusively located in women and men. Subjectivity is non-unitary and multiple, and it is the product, among other things, of variable discourses and practices concerning gender and gender difference. Women and men arrive at different understandings of themselves as gendered persons because they are differentially positioned with regard to discourses concerning gender and sexuality, and they take up different positions within those discourses (Moore 1994:64).

To understand what makes people take up certain subject positions, Moore uses the notion of 'investment'. What motivates people to take up certain

subjective position as opposed to another is their degree of investment in particular subject position. Investment here is a matter not just of emotional satisfaction, but of very real, material, social and economic benefits which are the reward of the senior man, the good wife, and the dutiful daughter in many social institutions. It is for this reason that modes of subjectivity and the question of identity are bound up with issues of power.

However, the process of taking up a subject position is not just matter of simple choice. Firstly, the historical contextualisation of discourses means that not all subject positions are equal, some positions carry more social reward than others and some are negatively sanctioned. The role of hegemonic discourse on gender and gender identity is central here. Secondly, the multiple and contradictory nature of subjectivity; the fact the individuals take up multiple subject positions, some of which may contradict each other, obviously cannot be explained in terms of theory of rational choice (Moore 1994:65).

Gramsci's notion of hegemonic ideology is useful in understanding how these dominant discourses are produced and reproduced. Gramsci (1971) conceives ideological hegemony as the result of a slow social process in which consensus is developed between dominant and subordinate groups. Such a consensus is expressed in the approval by subordinate groups of the dominant values, symbols and beliefs. This is achieved not by exercise of force, rather it is a process through which the intellectual's dominant views become the frame of ideas and visions of the subordinated which encourages the complicity and consent of the subordinate groups. Social institutions, such as the educational system, religion and mass media which serves to produce culture, play a significant role in the evolution of social consensus.

People's worldview, or commonsense, according to Gramsci, is fragmentary, incoherent and often inconsistent. As people uncritically absorb the dominant ideas and beliefs which contradict their actions, hegemonic control serves to integrate these fragmentary and contradictory elements into a unitary whole. Ideology in this sense acts as an organising principle which orders beliefs,

behaviour, social structures, and social relations within a certain perspective of the world (MacLeod 1991:75).

However, control is not total, and it is in the contradictions of common sense that the differentiation between the values of dominant and subordinate groups becomes visible. At the level of the individual, these contradictory imperatives may be seen as fragments of more systematic ideologies which are not present in the individual's mind. And the meaning of the fragments in consciousness may be unclear or only clarified within a specific context or under challenge or in action. In the same way, we cannot know in advance the meaning of actions – wearing the veil may be the product of individual piety or a substitute for piety, it may be a badge of membership of a group, a statement to society about the person, a mark of aspiration to join a social group, a mark of loyalty – to parents, to a husband, to friends or neighbours, to a fictional past way of life.

Thus, in one sense, consciousness is more an arena for debate than guided by systematic ideologies, a terrain of argument (a parallel to the bargaining model) as a person works out what they think their contradictory interests are and what is or is not justified. Thus, there are at least three levels involved here – first, how the person wishes to be seen (in an interview, by the interviewer) – by friends, neighbours, parents, employers, and society at large. Second, how they see themselves, changing at different moments and in different contexts, partly turning on whether they are confident, depressed, or tired. And finally, how the person behaves (which may indeed cause them surprise since they did not think, in advance, that they were capable of behaving in that way). We cannot assume any constancy in these three simplified levels or any necessary consistency between them.

This is not a problem we can resolve with any simple formula, but it is important to bear in mind the complexity that underlies talk of 'ideology' and its relationship to behaviour. Men, like women, are drawn in contradictory directions – both towards the affirmation of male authority and towards cherishing a wife – and the outcome cannot be read off simply from a scheme

of ideology or familiar predictions. This is particularly so where society is changing rapidly, undermining many formerly accepted assumptions.

This argument is particularly important when applied to understand women's lives in a changing society. Gender constructions in all cultures are often some of the most strongly held and persistently believed components of common sense reality. In Egypt, for example, despite the opportunity presented by socio-economic changes in everyday routines in men's and women's lives, they often remain trapped in traditional ideas of female and male rights, obligations and responsibilities (MacLeod 1991:152), at least in terms of how they wished to present themselves to the world at large. The diversity of behaviour, however, is often much wider.

This study therefore has to include the analysis of gender ideology and power relations within the household and link them to the processes of socio-economic and political changes in society at large (Wolf 1992:23).

## **6. Summary**

The issues raised in the study are related to a number of current problems and questions in the theoretical and empirical literature. In this way, the study can be seen as connected with several broad issues that investigate: 1) the relationship between women's informal employment and the household; 2) the household as a unit of cooperative conflict; 3) relations of gender inequality within and outside the household that are connected and mutually reinforcing; and 4) perceptions, ideologies and behaviour.

Our discussion has shown the importance of the household and domestic sphere as factors which condition women's participation in the labour force. It is argued that the gender division of labour, access to resources, power relations and gender ideology are all elements that play a role in differentiating men's and women's position in the labour market.

The gender division of labour and gender ideology straddle the great contradiction – between the growing demand for women's labour and the logic of the subordination of women simply to the maintenance family and children. The issues affect the availability of men and women for work outside the home and the types of jobs that are considered 'appropriate' for each. Women's access to productive resources in the household is conditioned by the prevailing gender ideologies and the different interpretations of these ideologies. The degree of autonomy available to women, their ability to negotiate strategies for coping with wider economic change is also affected by the unequal distribution of power within the household, the outcome of negotiation. Gender ideology both differentiates men's and women's labour in terms of value and status and legitimates these differences in terms of ultimate solidarity of the family unit.

In this sense, the way the household is conceptualised is crucial for methodological and empirical application. The conventional models, which assume the household as a cooperative and harmonious unit, tend to ignore gender inequality and thus the relation of domination and subordination reflected in gender roles. They also miss how the individual members in a household engage in different forms of behaviour, which may be expressed in resistance, passivity, ambivalence or selfishness. But above all, the model is static – not part of a changing social order, changing demands and opportunities. In the case of Egypt, this is of particular importance – the illusion of a stable family concept is belied by the radicalism of the changing context, redefining what the family is or is aspired to be.

In our study the household is seen as a 'cooperative-conflict' unit, in constant redefinition as the material and cultural context change. Members of households co-operate to increase the collective interest of the household, but this does not exclude conflicts that arise when members pursue individual self-interest within the structure of the household. Men and women are continually bargaining, negotiating and renegotiating their position within the household and the community. In the same way, the society is continually

forcing adjustment in the household in an analogous way to that in which changing prices force changes in household production or market trading.

The household members turn both to intra-domestic and extra-domestic means to ensure their survival, yet the processes that occur in the household are an integral part of the processes of the wider society. Thus, it is important to take into account the gender division of labour and gender ideologies within the household and link them to the wider changes in society.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **WOMEN'S INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT IN EGYPT**

#### **1. Introduction**

Women's participation in economic activity plays an important role in determining their social position as well as that of their households. However, it is well known that data on women's economic activity derived from official statistics in the developing countries are quite deficient particularly in the case of rural areas as they tend to underestimate the participation of women (Fergany 1994).

This situation holds true in the case of Egypt. Although there has been an increase in female participation in the labour force since the 1960s due to the expansion in education and employment opportunities, the statistics show one of the lowest rates in comparison to many developing countries. It is argued that the main reason behind such phenomenon is that official statistics do not account for a large number of women engaged in the informal sector.

Interest in studies concerning the informal sector in Egypt began to appear only in the early 1980s. It has been argued that the lack of reliable figures has been the main constraint facing researchers interested in this area. Until 1985, the statistical services of the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS), the main source of data on the Egyptian economy, made no reference to any form of production or commerce located outside the official sector (Kharoufi 1991:9).

The last decade has witnessed a relative growth in research projects and surveys of the informal sector in Egypt. Such interest can be attributed to the possible rapid growth of the informal sector during the past two decades. Of

concern was its sheer size, the role it played in generating employment, and its interaction with other economic sectors (Al-Mahdy 1995:1). However, little attention has been directed to women's participation and their position in this sector.

The objective of this chapter is to examine women's informal employment in Egypt. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first presents a brief account of the main developments in the Egyptian economy since the 1970s and their impact on the labour market and the informal sector. The second addresses several issues related to the informal sector in Egypt. These include the size, main characteristics, and the growth of this sector. The third section examines women's participation and the main characteristics of their work in both formal and informal sectors.

## **2. Growth, Structural Change, and Employment (1970-90)**

During this period, Egypt witnessed a dramatic shift in political and economic policies whose impact is thought to have been significant on employment, the labour market and, consequently, the informal sector. The policies of the earlier decades of the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s were replaced by a partial liberalisation programme, the so-called *Infitah*.

### **2.1. The Open Door Policy: Boom and Recession**

Richards and Waterbury (1990:238) defined the *Infitah* as a general term for shifts in state economic policy toward increased emphasis on the private sector, reform of public sector decision-making, opening the economy to international markets, and a greater reliance on market forces.

In the early 1970s, the Egyptian economy suffered from several maladies: stagnant productivity in the industrial sector, lagging agricultural growth, growing food imports, and a serious imbalance of trade. The Egyptian *Infitah* or Open Door Policy, initiated in 1974, was a response to both the internal



problems of state-led growth and shifts in the international economic and political environment.

The main goals of the Open Door Policy were to encourage foreign investment through joint-ventures with Egyptian public or private enterprises, to promote exports and the private sector, and to improve the productivity and competitiveness of the public sector. The policies involved the liberalisation and partial privatisation of foreign trade, reorganisation of the public sector in 1975 and again in 1983-84, and restructuring of the banking system. The legislative framework for this effort was based on two laws of joint-ventures, law 43 of 1974 which gave joint ventures tax holidays and other incentives, and its amendment in law 32 of 1977, and law 159 of 1981, which extended these benefits to purely Egyptian companies as well.

According to Richards and Waterbury (1990:241), the results of these policy shifts were mixed. The period of 1970 to 85 witnessed a dramatic increase in economic growth in Egypt, with overall GDP growth rates of about 8 percent per year. The ratio of domestic savings to GDP rose sharply from 8.5 percent in 1974 to 16 percent in 1985.

However, this improved growth was seen as not due to an increase in production capacity, but to the massive influx of foreign exchange income from the Suez Canal revenues, migrant workers remittances, revenues from oil exports and tourism (Handoussa 1991; Karshenas 1994). According to estimates by the World Bank (1983), these increased their share of GDP from about 6 per cent in the early 1970s to nearly 45 percent by the early 1980s.

During the 1970s oil boom period, a large proportion of the external revenues accruing to the government were re-invested in ambitious new projects in the public sector as well as in credits and other subsidies to generate private sector investment. Consequently, the share of investment in GDP increased significantly from about 13 percent in 1973 to 32 percent in 1979. Between 1973 and 1975, the rate of growth of domestic investment was close to 50 percent per annum. This massive increase posed a serious problem with

regard to the long-term sustainability of the growth process, given the windfall character of the new external resources (Dessouki 1991).

The *Infitah* period led to a boom in private sector investment. Similarly, the domestic private sector has witnessed marked growth. Although private investment has been concentrated on tourism, construction, and land reclamation, the share of the private sector in industrial production rose from 23 percent in 1974 to 32 percent in 1982, and further jumped to 40 percent in 1985 (Richards and Waterbury 1990:243). Furthermore, by 1980, about 17 percent of total investments were private joint-ventures between Egyptians and foreigners.

In spite of the apparent growth in the role of the private sector in the Egyptian economy, the public sector maintained its dominance in the non-agricultural sectors. By the late 1980s, the size of the public sector in Egypt was one of the largest amongst developing market economies in terms of the share of output, employment, value of fixed assets and gross investment. It produced about half the GDP. Its share in manufacturing production was more than 60 percent and it employed close to 70 percent of the official waged labour in the urban areas (Dessouki 1991: 260).

Table 3.1 Annual growth of GDP and its sectors in Egypt 1970-90

	1970-80	1980-85	1970-85	1985-90
Agriculture	3.0	2.7	2.9	2.0
Industry	8.5	5.8	7.6	2.3
Services	11.8	9.4	11.0	3.5
GDP	8.7	6.9	8.1	2.9
Investment	13.3	8.1	11.5	-5.8

Source: Karashenas, M. 1994 Structural Adjustment and Employment in the Middle East and North Africa. Economic Research Forum working paper no. 9420.

Table 3.1 shows the growth performance of the Egyptian economy between 1970 to 1990. It is evident that the 1970-85 period constituted a period of relatively high rates of economic growth. One striking feature is the higher rate of growth of investment in comparison to that of the GDP. According to

Karshenas (1994:23), the persistence of this phenomenon over such a long period of time is one indication of the inefficiency of resource utilisation in the Egyptian economy during the boom period. This is also reflected in the lack of competitiveness of the industrial sector and the sluggish growth of the industrial exports.

At the same time, government expenditure continued to grow at an even faster rate than its accrued income. According to Handoussa (1991:4), while the total state revenues increased from 29 percent of GDP in 1974 to 42 percent in 1982, its share of expenditure increased from 49 percent to 64 percent. This was reflected in the government budget deficit which reached 25 percent of GDP by the end of the 1970s, with an increase of 15 percent from 1973. This led to increasing resort to foreign borrowing to finance domestic investment.

Egypt's foreign debt, which stood at about 2 billion US dollars in the early 1970s, rapidly climbed to over 20 billion dollars by the early 1980s and 40 billion dollars by the mid 1980s. With the decline in oil prices in 1985/86 and a reduction in foreign aid and capital inflows, it became increasingly difficult to service the foreign debt. These factors together plunged the economy into recession, which prompted the government to administer severe cuts in investment. Moreover, since the mid-70s, there has been a general decline in public consumption from its record of 22 percent to reach 16 percent by 1985 (Handoussa 1991:4).

The recession was prolonged and deepened by the deflationary impact of the adjustment policies pursued by the government from 1987 when a foreign exchange crisis and mounting debt service arrears forced the government to embark upon the International Monetary Fund's prescribed reforms which were supposed to restore the external and the internal balances in the economy (Karshenas 1994:23).

This reform programme did not last long and by 1990 the debt service arrears had once again accumulated to over 11 billion US dollars. A more

comprehensive stabilisation and structural adjustment programme began in 1991 under the auspices of the World Bank and the IMF (Karshenas 1994:26).

The programme consisted of five major items of reform namely: fiscal policies, the exchange rate, interest rates, price policies, and the public sector. According to Karshenas (1994: 27), there was a large scale dismantling of state control over prices with drastic reductions in consumer and producer subsidies. Public sector enterprises were given managerial and financial autonomy including the power to restructure the assets and activities of their respective enterprises, with a large scale privatisation programme under way. The exchange rates were unified and a flexible exchange rate policy adopted. Liberalisation of interest rates combined with restrictive credit policies turned the negative real interest rates which prevailed during the 1970s and the 1980s into highly positive rates. Quantitative import restrictions were largely revised and the range of tariffs reduced.

Some authors have expressed reservations about the overall impact of the adjustment programme. Korayem (1995:28) argues that certain types of reform policies have created increased economic hardship for the poor through its impact on prices.

It is said that the increase in cost of living, which is due to the increase in prices and the reduction (or elimination) of subsidies, has often been felt more by the poor on relatively low incomes compared to the rest of the population, and that subsidies allocated to the basic consumer commodities and services were mainly consumed by them (Korayem 1995:31).

## **2.2. Employment and the Labour Market**

Many authors argue that the boom period left marked effects on the labour market. The structure of employment, investment across sectors and population movements have experienced dramatic changes.

A dominant characteristic of the Egyptian labour market over the past two decades has been the fast rate of growth of the labour force. Depending on the data sources used, varying estimates of the growth of the labour force, ranging from 2.5 to 3.0 percent per annum, are found in the literature (Karshenas 1994; Handoussa 1991; and Fergany 1991). However, since the mid-1970s, labour emigration has become a structural feature of employment. The regional oil boom has provided a huge market for Egyptian workers, attracting nearly 10 percent of Egypt's potential labour force (Handoussa 1991: 5).

The rapid growth of employment in construction and the non-agricultural rural sector, and the higher rates of emigration of agricultural labour to cities and to neighbouring countries, led to a decline in the share of agriculture in employment from 59.5 percent in 1973 to 36.5 percent in 1984 (Karashenas 1994:28). The share of construction and manufacturing sectors accounted for 21 and 15 percent of the increase in domestic employment respectively. More importantly, the expansion in state employment provided a staggering 53 percent of the net increase in employment (Handoussa 1991:5).

The high rate of labour absorption in the public sector was attributed to the outcome of the government's guaranteed employment policy, dating back to the 1960s, when the government guaranteed jobs for all graduates from middle and higher education. As a result, the state acted as the major employer in the non-agricultural sector, mopping up the fast increasing new additions to the urban labour market.

Over the 1973-85 period, the compounded effects of a high rate of agricultural labour emigration, a massive construction boom, increased demand for services and the influx of remittances from overseas, led to a rapid growth in real wages, more significantly so in the rural areas. In the formal sector, on the other hand, the real wage increases were moderate as part of a state policy to maximise the absorption of new additions to the labour market, particularly among high school and university graduates.

In public sector enterprises, the basic wage increased by about 1.6 percent per annum, compared to an increase of 2.4 percent in the formal private sector in urban areas. Some authors criticised this growth as too low for an economy subject to massive inflow of external resources and with the GDP growth rates of over 8 percent per year (Karshenas 1994:26). In direct contrast, real wages in informal activities in rural areas as well as the agricultural sector experienced a staggering increase of 11 percent per annum during the same period (Handoussa 1991).

From the early 1980s, under the pressures of a widening budget deficit, the government decided to abandon its guaranteed employment policy. At the same time, the boom in domestic construction declined with a fall in investment expenditure in construction, releasing a large unemployed labour force. This coincided with a sharp fall in oil prices and the international demand for labour so that Egypt's labour market lost its migration safety outlet.

The conclusion to these parallel processes was a rapid increase in unemployment from the early 1980s. The rate of open unemployment, according to the 1986 population census was 12 percent of the labour force, which is almost double the rate of 7.7 percent recorded in 1976. Estimates of open unemployment, based on the Labour Force Sample Survey (LFSS), show a gradual increase in unemployment from 2.5 percent in 1975 to 5.7 percent in 1982 to 10.5 percent in 1987 (Handoussa 1991:7). The results of recent rounds of LFSS indicate that the rate of open unemployment about 14 percent (Fergany 1995:8).

More significant than the level of unemployment is its structure. Available data show that unemployment has been largely concentrated among youth and graduates with no prior work experience (76.4 percent). This was a direct result of discontinuing guaranteed employment programme in government and public enterprises. The second and smaller group were those unemployed but who had had work experience (23.6 percent). More than half of the group was illiterate and another 22 percent had only basic education.

The unemployment rate for females is at least double that of males (Handoussa 1991:7).

At the same time, the rate of decline in basic real wages in the government sector showed a rapid acceleration from 1982. By 1987, basic real wages had declined to almost half the pre-boom levels of 1973. A direct result of such decline may be the tendency to take additional jobs to supplement deteriorating incomes, these extra jobs being mostly in the growing informal sector (Zaytoun 1991:249).

### **3. The Informal Sector**

#### **3.1. The Size of the Informal Sector**

Most studies of informal<sup>1</sup> sector are concerned with assessing its weight and relative importance in the Egyptian economy and its contribution to employment and economic growth. These studies base their evaluation of the size of the informal sector on the official statistics.

Given the diversity of definitions adopted by various authors, it is not surprising to find considerable variations in the estimates of the size of the informal sector. Estimates of workers operating in this sector range from 16 percent of the labour force (Abdel Fadil 1983; Birks and Sinclair 1982), to 22 percent (CAPMAS 1985).

In a more recent study, Handoussa and Potter (1992) suggest a new estimate based on the size of the establishment (less than ten workers) at nearly 2.3 million individuals, and 2.8 million individuals for the years 1976 and 1986

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions of the informal sector vary widely in the literature; however, three main definitions seem to be most recurrent. These are: 1) size of the establishment (less than 10 workers), and/or Employment status (self-employed persons) (for example Handoussa 1993). 2) The ILO definition which concentrate on the characteristics of the enterprise (for example Birks and Sinclair 1982; Abdel Fadil 1983; and Mead 1982). 3) Legal status (For example, CAPMAS 1985).

respectively, representing 23.6 percent and 26.3 percent of the total active labour force. Fergany (1991:36) arrives at similar figures for the mid-1980s by adopting the same definition.

By defining informal activity as the absence of any registration with the authorities, and limiting the size of enterprises to less than five persons, Rizk (1991:171) restricted her estimate of the percentage of workers in the informal sector to the total number of workers in the non-agricultural private sector. For 1976, she claimed that the size of the informal sector stood at 2,416,000 jobs in comparison to only 170,000 in the formal private sector, that is, the latter was merely seven percent of the former.

In spite of these evident variations in the available studies, their estimations of the size of the informal labour force indicate that it has a substantial relative weight within the Egyptian labour market.

However, all these studies are based on official statistics, which means that they underestimate the actual size of the informal sector, as it is difficult to account for the number of workers involved in typically unrecorded or concealed activities. Another inaccuracy arises from the difficulty in distinguishing between workers in the two sectors, who can easily move from regulated to informal activities or combine the two at the same time.

### **3.2. The Growth of the Informal Sector**

The informal sector has received little recognition in most of the analyses of the macro-economy of Egypt. One study by Handoussa and Potter (1992) attempted to rectify this situation by re-examining available statistical data from official sources namely: the *Population Census* and the *Census of Establishments* for inconsistencies, and drew conclusions on the size and growth of informal sector employment during the period between 1976 and 1986. Their findings will be reviewed in detail because of its direct relevance to this research.



Table 3.2 Aggregate employment according to major employer in the non-agricultural sectors of economic activity. (In Thousands)

Economic Activity	Government		Public Sector		Private Formal		Private Informal		Total Employment		% of Informal to Total	
	1976	1986	1976	1986	1976	1986	1976	1986	1976	1986	1976	1986
Mining and Energy	46.9	63.9	33.3	60.6	1.1	18	13.7		95.1	138.4	14.4	
Manufacturing	32.8	13.8	594.7	715.9	111.9	178.6	619.9	604.8	1366.6	1513.1	45.4	40.0
Construction	-	-	96.6	144.1	4.6	13.3	321.6	706.6	422.8	864	76.1	81.8
Trade, restaurants & hotels	3.4	-	52.4	103.6	22.7	48.2	778	708.7	856.5	860.5	90.8	82.4
Transport & Communication	173.3	178.4	102.2	132.8	5	11.7	198.5	332.3	479.4	655.7	41.4	50.7
Finance	28.6	26.5	34.2	81.1	0.9	14.3	24.1	112.9	87.8	236.5	27.4	47.7
Social & Personal Services	1430	2205.3	17.7	4.4	24	26.6	378.3	391.5	1850	2632.4	20.4	14.9
Total Non-agriculture*	1715.4	2516.1	931.1	1257.7	170.2	310.7	2334.1	2856.8	5158.2	7152.8	45.3	39.9
Increase		800.7		326.6		140.5		552.7		1994.6		

Source: Government, public and total private sector from CAPMAS, Population Census of 1976, detailed results (Cairo, 1978) and CAPMAS, Population Census of 1986, detailed results (Cairo, 1991), table 21 pp. 104-115, Compiled by Handoussa (1992).

\* The various economic activities cited above are not all the components of this total so summing some of the columns may not yield the totals as apparent in this row.

The authors indicate that during the 1980s, even though the share of the private sector in the GDP grew from 51 percent to 60 percent, its share in the total increase in non-agricultural employment was less than 5 percent. At the same time, the public sector had ceased to grow, having frozen at 36 percent of aggregate employment and 40 percent of the GDP between 1986 and 1990. It is evident that the private sector officially has not grown enough to compensate for the rapid slow down in public employment and income generation (Handoussa and Potter 1992:4). Table 3.2 shows that it is the informal sector, with its broad base, which accounts for about 80 percent of the growth of total private employment outside of agriculture.

The 1986 *Census of Establishments* indicates that the period between 1976 and 1986 has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of new enterprises (1.1 million). A majority of these enterprises started operations in 1976 and after. The share of the private sector in this growth has been higher than that of the public sector. Private sector establishments increased by 54.2 percent, with an employment growth of 68.1 percent, whereas the number of the

establishments in the public sector rose only by 32.3 percent with growth in employment of only 15.3 percent.

Table 3.3 Size distribution of establishments and employment, private sector, 1976 and 1986

Size	Establishment				Employment				% Increase	
	1976	%	1986	%	1976	%	1986	%	E	L
1-4	704,566	95.1	1,049,508	94.8	992,107	70.2	1,585,971	66.7	49.0	59.9
5-9	25,995	3.5	41,005	3.7	160,377	11.3	252,778	10.6	57.7	57.6
10-49	9,526	1.3	15,073	1.4	163,242	11.5	267,560	11.3	58.2	63.9
50-99	518	0.1	1,149	0.1	33,655	2.4	74,567	3.1	121.8	121.6
100-499	269	0.0	511	-	48,093	3.4	91,969	3.9	90.0	91.2
500-999	17	-	53	-	12,400	0.9	35,915	1.5	211.8	189.6
1000+	2	-	16	-	4,191	0.3	68,930	2.9	700.0	1544.7
total	740,893	100	1,107,315	100	1,414,065	100	2,377,690	100	54.2	68.1

Source: Handoussa, A. & Potter, G. (1992) *Egypt Informal Sector: Engine of Growth?* MESA Conference. E = Establishments, L = Employment.

According to the 1986 *Population Census*, the total private sector grew by only 26.5 percent over the decade. The 1986 *Establishment Census* recorded an increase of 68.2 percent in the number of employees in private establishments over the same decade. Similarly, employment in micro establishments manufacturing and trade sectors grew by 34.5 percent and 38.2 percent respectively, while both population censuses (1976 and 1986) implied the decline in employment in these two sectors which together account for more than half of the jobs in the informal sector. This inconsistency between the 1986 *Population Census* and the *Establishment Census* of the same year was confirmed by the fact that, in absolute terms, the growth in private employment in the *Population Census* is 664,000 as opposed to 964,000 in the *Establishment Census*.

Such discrepancies according to the authors resulted from underreporting of jobs in the *Population Census* in comparison to the *Establishment Census* where enumeration is conducted in the workplace. For example, the vast majority of the unemployed population were new entrants to the labour force who held high or intermediate degrees which made them eligible for the government guaranteed employment scheme, and they were not likely to report having full or part-time jobs in the informal sector for fear of losing their

entitlement to government jobs. Similarly, government employees who held a second job, which is illegal, usually do not mention their informal employment.

The authors also consider the growth in the labour force by employment status.

The data on employment status in the *Population Census* results of 1976 and 1986 indicate that self-employment has been responsible for a significant increase in jobs in the non-agriculture and the public sectors. 'Self-employed' and 'employer' categories together increased by 51 percent. Meanwhile the number of paid employees increased by only 20 percent over the same period, which further suggests the growing importance of the informal sector.

The authors argue that the informal sector has been one of the leading growth sectors in the Egyptian economy. For those activities that can be measured, the Population Census shows that by 1986, it had created employment for more than 40 percent of the non-agricultural labour force, for more than 80 percent in the construction and trade sectors, 50 percent in transport, and 40 percent in manufacturing. As to the Census of Establishments of 1986, it shows an even higher share of 52 percent of non-agricultural employment (1992:13).

Two major conclusions, according to the authors, can be drawn from these preceding interpretations. The first is that the informal sector is actually much larger than is officially quantified. The second is that the informal sector has grown faster during the *infitah* period than at any previous period of state-led economy.

Handoussa and Potter saw that the growth of the informal sector came as a result of privatisation and during the boom period. Whereas other writers (for example Abdel Fadil 1983) argue that the growth of the informal sector is related to the inability of the formal industrial sector to absorb the large numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled people, whether migrants or not.

However, Hopkins (1991:122) comments:

Whether one looks at it [informal sector] as an explosion of the private sector, or as survival strategies of the downtrodden, clearly tremendous energy is being devoted to the pursuit of private goals, usually monetary. This implies a concern for upward mobility, for getting ahead in life, that, at the very least, acts as a counterweight to over-urbanisation.

### **3.3. The Characteristics of the Informal Sector**

Micro-level studies are found to be more informative and useful to depict the diversity and characteristics of informal sector activities. These studies cover a broad spectrum of economic activities in both the urban and the rural settings (for example, Mead 1982; CAPMAS 1985; and Meyer 1987). The majority of these studies adopt the size of enterprise, being limited to less than 10 workers per establishment, as the defining criterion. Some define the informal sector as covering all non-registered activities while others avoid such perplexity by relying instead on descriptive characterisations.

One specific characteristic most of these studies were concerned about was the earnings level of those participating in the informal sector. Some scholars have correlated work in the informal sector with the urban poor. For example Abdel Fadil (1983:55) argues that poor individuals usually work in occupations that are characterised by low productivity and low-income levels. He observes that they are typically recent migrants from rural areas who could not find work in the formal sector.

Although informal employment may emerge as a response to economic need or to absence of better alternatives in the labour market, in some cases, the earnings derived from informal work cannot be considered simply as means of subsistence. Informal activities encompass the work of freelance interior designers as well as street sellers.

Almost all studies considered below, view the informal sector as providing relatively high incomes for those who are active in it.

A CAPMAS survey (1985) indicates that approximately 75 percent of workers in the informal sector earn wages that exceeded the legal minimum wage then (LE35 monthly) and more than 50 percent of the workers' wages ranged between LE3-7 per day (1985 prices). Mead's (1982) study of workshops producing furniture in Cairo and Alexandria indicates that the wage of the worker in these micro-enterprises was three times higher than the wage of employees with a university degree.

Al-Mahdy and Mashour (1992) point out that earnings in small-scale establishments are found to be 22 percent above the national average wage. Hofmann's study (1985) of the city of Fayoum indicates that the minimum wage paid in informal local workshops generally exceeds the minimum wage paid in the public and private formal establishments in larger cities. Rizk (1991) also shows that nearly half the paid workers in the *non-organised* sector earn a wage that equals or exceeds net basic salary of the newly appointed university employee (LE52 monthly). This suggests that informal sector employment should not be equated with low earning or survival income levels.

The major advantages of these enterprises that contributed to their growth derive from their small size, negligible cost of overheads, low use of working capital and an ability to draw on relatively cheap labour (Mead 1982). Some studies emphasise the low capital intensity of these enterprises which reduces labour productivity, yet, raises the net income earned per establishment (CAPMAS 1985; Mead 1982).

Another important feature of micro-enterprises is their savings and financial behaviour. In all cases, the bulk of capital needed to start projects is raised independently of formal credit institutions, thus bypassing the strict requirements imposed by such institutions for credit and loans such as guarantees and collateral. Expansion was mostly financed from profits generated by the enterprise (Handoussa and Potter 1992).

The studies also highlight the diversity of economic activities in the informal units. The CAPMAS study shows that the largest proportion of "micro-enterprises" (43 percent) are engaged in manufacturing, and 35.4 percent and 18.3 percent in trade and service sectors respectively. Similar findings are found in Rizk's study. This reveals that informal activities are highly concentrated in manufacturing (59.8 percent), followed by the commercial sector (31.4 percent), and service sector (4.9 percent). Al-Mahdy and Mashour show that most of the enterprises (41.6 percent) in their sample are concentrated in the service sector, 35.8 percent are in the commercial sector, and only 23.8 percent engaged in manufacturing.

With regard to skill levels, several studies show that these enterprises employ workers with ordinary skills as well as those with special or distinguished skills (CAPMAS 1985; Mead 1982). Other studies indicate that micro enterprises rely on the acquisition of skill through a highly specialised apprenticeship system. For example, in the construction industry, 83.5 per cent of skilled workers acquire their skill this way. This has the implication of hindering the flexibility and mobility of labour in some segments of the informal sector as it poses higher barriers to exit stagnant segments and enter growing ones (Assaad 1993).

Another issue raised in these studies is related to the conditions in which workers in these enterprises work. Most studies indicate that poor conditions - such as an absence of social insurance, long working hours, and absence of minimal sanitary and safety regulations- are often found in the informal sector.

#### **4. Women's Employment in the Formal/Informal Sector**

Studying women's informal employment is a difficult task. The available statistical data concentrate on the work of women in the formal sector and hence do not reflect the real extent of female participation in the informal sector. Among the wealth of material written on the informal sector in Egypt, we find very few references to women's work and position in this sector.

Many authors (for example, Anker 1990, Fergany 1994) recognise the shortcomings of the official data sources such as population censuses and labour surveys regarding the extent of female employment in Egypt. They argue that women's economic participation is greatly under-estimated in these statistics due to a bias towards paid employment, deficient methods of data collection, and cultural inhibitions in admitting to women working. The invisibility and the unrecognised nature of family labour are considered as other causes for such under-representation of women's involvement in economic activities (Lynch and Fahmi 1984).

In addition, several micro-studies reveal that in both rural and urban areas, women are engaged in many income-generating activities that go unrecorded and unaccounted for in the calculation of the country's GNP (CAPMAS 1992:15).

In general, data on women's employment can be obtained from two main sources: the Population Census and Labour Force Sample Surveys (LFSS). The former captures only economic activity in the formal sector, whereas the latter, since 1983, include economic activities in both sectors.

To gain a better understanding of women's participation in the informal sector we need to consider the characteristics of women's employment in the formal sector.

#### **4.1. The Formal Sector**

The last two censuses show that women's labour force participation rose from 8 percent in 1976 to 10 percent in 1986. In 1983, an attempt was made by CAPMAS to improve the measurement of women's economic activity through adopting a broader definition of work, more efficient field procedures, and interviewing a higher proportion of women. This resulted in a rise in the

activity rate of women from 9.3 percent in 1982 to more than 17 percent in 1983 survey (Fergany 1994).

A closer examination of the characteristics of women's employment<sup>2</sup> in urban areas reveals that 19.3 percent of all urban females over the age of six were economically active. The activity rate rises to nearly 40 percent in the age group 20 to 29 and then declines with age (Zaytoun 1998:16).

With regard to women's employment status, the data showed that two thirds of the economically active women worked for a wage, 23 percent were unpaid household workers, 6 percent self-employed and the rest were employers.

Women were distributed in the labour market differently from men. They were concentrated in two major sectors of economic activity, agriculture and services, 41.9 percent and 38.8 percent respectively, and were least represented in manufacturing (8.1 percent) and commerce (7.1 percent).

As for men, although a high proportion was concentrated in both agriculture and services (53.8 percent), it was less than that of women (80.6 percent). The rest were distributed in manufacturing (15.7 percent), commerce (11.2 percent), construction (7.7 percent), and in transportation (7.1 percent).

Analysing urban working women by sector of employment, the data indicated that women were much more concentrated in the government sector than men - 67 percent compared with 26 percent. In the public sector there was a slightly higher percentage of men (15.9 percent) compared with that of women (10 percent). Thus, the State (government and public sector) accounted for 77 percent of total female employment. The situation was different in the private sector where the proportion of men (56 percent) was much higher than that of women (21 percent).

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<sup>2</sup> The data presented in this section is based on the Labour Force Sample Survey (LFSS) for the year 1995 (CAPMAS 1996a).



There were also a wide gender differentials in the occupational structure. Women were mainly concentrated in clerical and technical and scientific occupations (40 percent and 31.5 percent of the total workforce of the two occupations, respectively).

In these two main occupations<sup>3</sup>, women were concentrated in the low-grade jobs. Within the technical and scientific professions, women tended to be concentrated in low-status occupations such as teaching (46.5 percent) and nursing (14.7 percent), while men were in high-status occupations such as engineering (30 percent) and accounting (16.3 percent). Medicine was the one occupation where the concentration of women (6.8 percent) was close to that of men (7.4 percent).

Women's concentration at the bottom of occupational hierarchies is a major cause of earnings inequality<sup>4</sup>. However, there were high gender differentials in earnings within occupational groups, especially in manual work. Men's relative concentration in manufacturing, construction and transport meant a higher access to higher-waged jobs, whereas women were confined to personal services and retailing, which were typically low-wage jobs (Zaytoun 1991: 239).

In general, women average earnings were about 69 percent of men's. Gender differentials in earnings were less in the public sector, with women's average earning amounting to 81 percent of men's. This may be because educational qualification rather than gender were the most important determinant for job access. In addition, the policy of guaranteed employment opened up employment without discrimination for educated women in different public sector and government occupations. The highest wage differential prevails in

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<sup>3</sup> In this section we will depend on the 1986 census as such details are not available in the LFSS data.

<sup>4</sup> The information on earnings is based on the main source of such data in Egypt: the Employment, Wages, and Hours of Work (EWHW) which is published by CAPMAS.

the private sector where women workers receive on average almost half the men's remuneration.

Much of the occupational inequality between men and women was linked to gender segregation. Women's confinement to 'female' occupations was high in all occupational groups, even at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy. 'Male' jobs were at the top of the occupational hierarchy whereas 'female' jobs were at the bottom. This was more pronounced within manual occupations.

With reference to unemployment, the results of the LFSS (1995) show that unemployment rates among women were much higher than men in all educational levels (see table 3.4). The most remarkable characteristic of unemployment is its link with educational attainment. Women with intermediate education suffer a high unemployment rate of 52 percent compared to 1 percent for illiterates. The next highest unemployment rate (17.5 percent) is found among university graduates.

Table 3.4 Gender differentials in unemployment\* rates by educational attainment (15-64 years old)

Educational Level	Male Unemployment	Female Unemployment
Illiterate	0.5	0.1
Reads & Writes	0.6	2.2
Less than Intermediate	2.2	10.8
Intermediate	24.1	52.0
University and Higher	9.7	17.5
Total	7.5	24.1

Source: Labour Force Sample Survey 1995. In Zaytoun, M. 1998:25

\* defined as not working and seeking work

According to Zaytoun (1998:25), The evidence of unemployment at the higher educational levels and the desire to work amongst women currently not in paid work suggests that demand factors played an important role in limiting women's access to appropriate employment. On the other hand, the very low incidence of unemployment among illiterate may mean that they are involved in informal sector activities.

## 4.2. The Informal Sector

A few studies considered women's participation in the informal sector, and provided different estimates depending on the definition. For example, Meyer (1989), Al-Mahdy and Mashour (1989), adopting the size of establishment criterion, gave an estimate of 10.2 percent. However, in a study by CAPMAS (1985), the figure was a mere 3 percent.

The relative importance of women's participation in the informal sector can be seen from a recent study by Zaytoun (1998), where she compares the results of two studies conducted in 1976 and 1988. As shown in table 3.5, there was a vast increase in the number of women in the informal sector. This, however, can be partly attributed to the methodology adopted by the two studies as the first study was based on the 1976 census while the second used results from the LFSS. Both studies show higher participation of women in the informal sector compared to total participation in overall non-agricultural activities.

Table 3.5 Women participation in the informal sector

Number of Workers in the Informal Sector	First Study 1976	Second Study 1988
Male	427.9	1,114.0
Female	62.1	447.0
Total	490.0	1,593.0
% Female	12.7	28.1

Source: Zaytoun (1998: 76)

The two occupations in the informal sector that are considered in the Population Census 1986 are domestic service and trading. In the service sector 80 percent of women are found in the informal sector compared to about 30 percent of men. Women are mainly concentrated in domestic services (54 percent). In trading women were concentrated in two occupations, seller assistants and street vendors, 61 percent of women compared to 42 percent of men. This indicates that in the informal sector women are concentrated in the low-status occupations (Zaytoun 1998:79).

The limited and unreliable statistical data on women's work in the informal sector have led interested researchers to seek detailed information from case studies.

Most of the available micro-studies of Egyptian women in the informal sector focus on women's activities in rural areas. In this context, they indicate that women are very active both in agricultural and non-agricultural work. In farm labour, women are involved in many activities such as, cultivation, harvesting, and animal husbandry (for example, Jennings 1998). Women are also found to be active in a variety of productive non-agricultural works such as, weaving, sewing and the manufacture of mats and baskets (Lynch and Fahmy 1984; Larson 1998; and Butler 1998).

These studies present types of economic activities, performed by women, as part of the survival strategies of the household.

In the urban context, the few available studies include some treatment of women in specific informal economic activities such as street vending (Loza 1991), and dairy production (Davis *et al.* 1984). Loza's study was carried out in Menia, one of the major cities of Upper Egypt, and focused on the vending enterprises of selling cooked food and beverages. The author indicates that these were basically household enterprises. From her findings, of 1,348 vendors working in food enterprises, 11 percent were female, while 17 percent of all the enterprises included female vendors (1991:49).

In their study of small enterprises in the two governorates of Fayoum and Qalyubiya, Davis *et al.* (1984) conclude that dairy produce was the most popular type of enterprise which attracted about 50 percent of all reported employment. Women were found to form a significant proportion of this labour force as well as running their own household enterprises. The highest concentration of women was found in dairy production and textile industries. Most of these women worked from their homes for customers who were predominately women.

A study commissioned by Economic and Social Committee for West Asia (ESCWA1989) is relevant to our research since it directly tackles women's

work in the informal sector<sup>5</sup> in Cairo. The study investigates the conditions of work, and the relationship between work and household activities. The study covered 200 working women in Al-Materia, a poor neighbourhood in the north-east of Cairo.

The study indicates that the majority (80 percent) of the women in the sample belong to low-income strata with little or no education and fall in the age group of 13-34 years. More than 50 percent of female workers were originally migrants from rural areas. Married women formed 96 percent of the sample. About 53 percent are self-employed women (working at home) and the rest were employed by others. With regard to women's economic activities, the study reveals that the majority engaged in simple food-processing, followed by petty-trading and other minor services. All these activities are characterised by a low level of skill. The main motive for seeking employment for the majority of women has been the insufficiency of a husband's or a father's income.

The women complained of long working hours and low income. Waged workers further suffered from transport problems and from the difficulty in combining work and domestic responsibilities. More than 75 percent of the women reported that they could not stop working because their families were dependent on their income. However, about 90 percent indicated that they had no control over their earnings.

The main shortcoming of all the studies reviewed above is that they overlook the importance of intra-household relations and of the gender division of labour in their analyses. Only one study by Lynch and Fahmi (1984) examined these issues in the rural context. The study was conducted in the village of Kerdassa, on the outskirts of Cairo, and focused on small-scale producers of a wide range of craft items produced mainly for the nearby city and tourist markets. Although women's participation was significant, the males perceived women's contribution as a welcome *help* while the females felt it was an obligation they had to fulfil.

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<sup>5</sup> Defined according to size, technology used, and lack of registration with the authorities.

The study indicates that while the gender division of labour varies from craft to craft, in general, women are allocated unskilled tasks. For example, the wife dyes the yarn for her husband, the weaver; a woman sews the material that her husband cuts. Men perform all activities deemed inappropriate for women; they obtain the raw materials, market the goods, and collect the fees. The male household head is the decision-maker in virtually all matters.

In their conclusion, the authors explain that even though the women did much of the work, they were not regarded as workers by themselves or by others. Further, their participation in work neither improved their status within the family nor greatly increased their economic independence. These women, lacking in capital, education, and mobility, with little rewards from their toil, were unable to purchase productive assets, build business networks, or develop marketable skills. They worked under their husbands' authority to improve their family's income so as to retire to a life of full domesticity.

## **5. Summary**

This chapter has attempted to examine women's participation in the informal sector in Egypt and the characteristics of their work. To do so we have presented an overview of the main characteristics of the informal sector in the Egyptian context as revealed in the available literature. The discussion showed that no matter how the informal sector was defined, it was evident that it was becoming a widespread phenomenon.

To situate the informal sector in the wider context of the economy, a brief account of the main economic developments that took place in Egypt during the period of 1970 to 1990 was presented, as this period marked a shift in economy from a state-led towards a market-oriented economy.

The Open Door Policy brought about relatively high rates of economic growth (estimated at 8 percent) between 1974-85. In general, the period was

characterised by relative growth in investment, and employment especially in the construction industry and government employment. More significant was the growth in the informal sector.

The informal sector in Egypt has played an important role in the past two decades. It was an investment outlet for extra resources such as remittances from workers abroad. It was also a major sector in absorbing additional labour when the traditional employment provider for the educated, the state, ceased to do so.

By the mid-1980s, the boom years, however, ended with a collapse of oil prices and the slow down in the economy. The massive influx of foreign funds meant that Egypt was left with a large debt, and debt servicing was consuming a good part of its revenues. This resulted in an increase in unemployment especially with the government's abandonment of the guaranteed employment programme.

These economic changes had an impact on women's labour force participation. Women benefited from the expansion of education and employment opportunities, especially in the government sector. Although women's participation rates increased throughout, they were less than that of men's. In general, their overall situation improved although relative inequality between men and women persisted.

Our discussion has shown that women's distribution in the labour market was different from men. Women were concentrated in certain sectors of the economy; services and agriculture. In the occupational structure women were found in few occupation and at the bottom of the overall occupational hierarchies. This was the main cause for earnings inequality.

Gender segregation also existed in the informal sector. Although, the data on the distribution and earnings are scarce, the available data from micro studies show that the characteristics of women's employment in the informal sector are in accordance with their position in the formal sector.

In explaining the persistence of gender segregation within the formal and informal sectors, many have argued that the household exerts an indirect influence on women's participation from the supply side, that it influences the availability of women for work, and their investment in education and training. Recent works, discussed in the previous chapter, have also shown that gender influences the demand for labour because of its influence on work roles, workplace interaction, and gender-typing of jobs (Scott 1994; and Stichter 1990).



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **1. Introduction**

The previous chapter continued providing the wider context within which our subjects live and work. The remaining chapters are devoted to the actual details of the lives, and their work, as revealed through our fieldwork.

The analyses in the following chapters draw on material from research carried out in Cairo during the period from March until August 1995. This chapter contains a detailed description of the research methods adopted in this study. It covers four areas. The first presents the research objectives and the hypothesis. The second considers sites of the study and criteria for our selection. The third concentrates on the sampling procedure and the main characteristics of the chosen sample. The final area examines the various methods of data collection.

In combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study attempts to avoid the shortcomings of each method when used by itself. In general, surveys allow for sophisticated statistical analysis, however, they provide only a limited form of information to emerge. Conversations are structured in question-and-answer format decided in advance by the researcher, answers are altered by the power-laden setting of an interview, and discussion are necessarily more superficial. On the other hand, a qualitative approach has many advantages in tackling problematic and sensitive topics in a way not possible in surveys. Yet, they do not lend themselves to statistical analysis or to generalisation.

## **2. Research Objectives**

The study attempts to detect the impact of two particular types of informal employment on women's perception of their position within the household -in terms of access to resources and decision-making.

In order to highlight such impact, the research makes a comparative study between women engaged in home-based petty-production, and women engaged in petty-trading. We aim to explore some of the factors which determine whether working outside the household enhances women's bargaining power within the household when compared with the work within the household.

Our main empirical question is, does the transformation of the household into a unit of production convert the social relations in the household to economic ones? And, if so, does this conversion intensify the subordination of women home-based producers?

Other research questions are concerned with the following: first, the extent to which the location of paid work affect power relations within the household? In other words, does the work experience of petty-traders who operate in two separate spheres, the market and the home, affect their perception of their position within the household? Second, to what extent does the organisation of paid work affect women's degree of control and command over their work; and; third, what are the roles played by the husbands in these different work arrangements?

The comparison between the two groups falls into three main areas. The first area considers the organisation of work depending on the types of work performed by women in each group and work conditions such as work hours, work relations. Our analysis also includes the interaction of women's work with factors such as, education, income level and number of children.

The second area focuses on the household in terms of money management and domestic decision-making. This is an important aspect of the analysis of gender hierarchies within the household since access and control of monetary income may be regarded as an indicator of the underlying balance of power. The comparison covers patterns of financial arrangements and expenditure within the household; women's role in decision-making with regard to domestic matters; and finally the gender division of labour.

The third area examines the impact of women's work on aspects of their awareness, particularly those corresponding to gender roles and gender relations. The comparison includes women's perception of their position within the household, their work, and their personal autonomy.

## **2.1. Hypothesis**

The study has been seeking to test the following hypothesis: *Home-based women producers are subjected to an intensification of subordination to male authority in comparison to women petty-traders.*

## **2.2. Measures**

Empirically, power within the household can be equated with control over decision-making. Thus, in attempting to measure marital power, most researchers have used information about which partner makes specific decisions (Pahl 1989; Nawar *et al.* 1994; and Ramu 1991), an approach that we will adopt throughout this study.

Although the outcome of decision-making is still considered the primary indicator of marital power, it is important to note that there are several shortcomings in this approach. It gives the same weight to decisions of different importance (Pahl 1989). It also neglects the processes which precede making a decision, since the process by which partners reach decision is one of the complex issues in studying domestic units (Papanek 1989). Finally, it may ignore the structural inequalities between men and

women, because it assumes that men and women have equal chances of getting the most advantageous outcomes in their negotiations on important marital matters (Komter 1989:188).

In order to measure the extent of control exercised by men over women within the household, a scale has been developed using a set of variables intended to cover a wide spectrum of women's lives and relationships within the household. These variables were structured as indicators in a questionnaire with each carrying a scale that measures the intensity of subordination. An aggregate scale was also developed for each category.

Three broad categories were identified, corresponding to the three areas of comparison, each of which was further sub-divided into a sufficient number of indicators, forming a scale which reflects the degree of *subordination/autonomy* of women with regard to each category. These categories are: (1) women's work and their income; (2) household financial arrangements, domestic work, and childcare; and (3) freedom of movement, fertility decisions, and veiling. Wife battering was also included in the latter scale.

Each indicator used was represented by a question regarding a certain decision; the respondents were asked whether that decision was likely to be made by the *female alone*, by the *male alone*, or *jointly*. Another set of questions was designed to assess whether women can act on their own or needed their husbands'/ fathers' approval. Three possible answers were given: *always*, *sometimes*, and *never*.

The different scales were constructed from the questionnaire items with each question carrying a score such that a higher score indicates a higher degree of independence and/or lower degree of subordination.

Given the three possible answers to each question under the different categories the score ran from a low of one, if the husband/ father decided alone or the woman needed permission, to a high of three, if the woman

decided alone or did not seek her husband's/father's approval. A score of two implied equal participation between partners in decision-making on the issue considered.

The scores from questions (indicators) were summed and normalised producing the *category score*, which ran from a low of five to a high of 15. Higher scores indicate a higher degree of independence and/or lower subordination.

The scoring is applied only to ever-married women because we are interested in marital power relations. Moreover, some of the questions are not applicable in the case of unmarried women (for example, domestic work, childcare, and fertility).

### **3. The Sites**

The research was carried out in two neighbourhoods in Cairo; El-Zawia El-Hamra and Al-Ameria. The neighbourhoods were chosen for two main reasons. First, in the absence of statistical data noting the number of women engaged in the economic activities under study, the main selection criteria adopted for the study areas was the availability of self-employed women who satisfied the categories defined above, home-based producers and market petty-traders, who lived in the same locality.

Second, our choice of the areas was further limited by the difficulty in identifying those women working at home since they were generally suspicious and denied working at home. As a result, the availability of contacts, willing to facilitate our access to the target groups, was also instrumental in defining the two possible areas for the fieldwork.

What follows is a detailed description of the two neighbourhoods which covers demographic, geographic data and socio-economic conditions.

### **3.1. The Neighbourhoods**

The two neighbourhoods lie to the north-east of Cairo, El-Zawia is part of El-Zawia district (map 4.1) and Al-Ameria is part of Al-Zayton district (see map 4.2), both in Cairo governorate.

Prior to the mid-60s, the two areas were mainly agricultural and until recently there were still some scattered agricultural plots. The growth of the areas into a larger community during the late 1960s was the result of government programmes to provide housing for the residents, mainly low-income families.

In both areas the housing is similar; public housing that contains two, three or four roomed flats. In Al-Ameria, these buildings are concentrated in one area while in El-Zawia they are distributed in four main clusters. The public housing blocks are surrounded by privately built apartment blocks. The public houses are perfectly centred within the neighbourhoods because government policy in the 1960s was to establish new neighbourhoods by building public houses and allowing private housing to emerge in the areas surrounding them.

Public housing consists of five floor blocks with 40-75 sq. meter flats, each floor contains two to 10 flats depending on the flat areas. Private houses are mostly three to six floors with a few reaching seven or even 10 floors. Latest statistics show that nearly 10 percent of housing in both areas is state built. Most of the private houses were built without legal permits.

Paved roads surround the two areas and connect them to the rest of Cairo while the internal streets are mainly narrow and unpaved. In both areas, the majority of buildings have electricity, running water and sanitation services. Only 5.1 percent of houses in both areas don't have electricity, all but 7.9 percent of houses have running water in Al-Zawia compared to 10.5 percent in the case of Al-Ameria. As for sanitation, 82.1 percent of houses in Al-Ameria are served by the public network, while 17.5 percent of houses are served by non-network means. The figures for El-Zawia are 84.3 percent. The telephone network is also accessible in the areas. Public transportation

services, mainly buses, connect the two areas with the rest of the city. The areas have the usual assortment of groceries, butchers, home supplies stores, and cafes, common to popular quarters in Cairo.

Like many other areas in the city, the two areas are characterised by class heterogeneity. Members of several social classes share living and recreation space in the same area. It is common to find government employees, low ranked army or police officers, workers, traders, and artisans.

According to the 1986 census<sup>1</sup>, Al-Ameria population was 250,000, the majority of whom had migrated from rural areas in northern Egypt. Al-Zawia, on the other hand, had a population of 500,000.

Table 4.1 Distribution by education in Al-Ameria (percentage to total population)

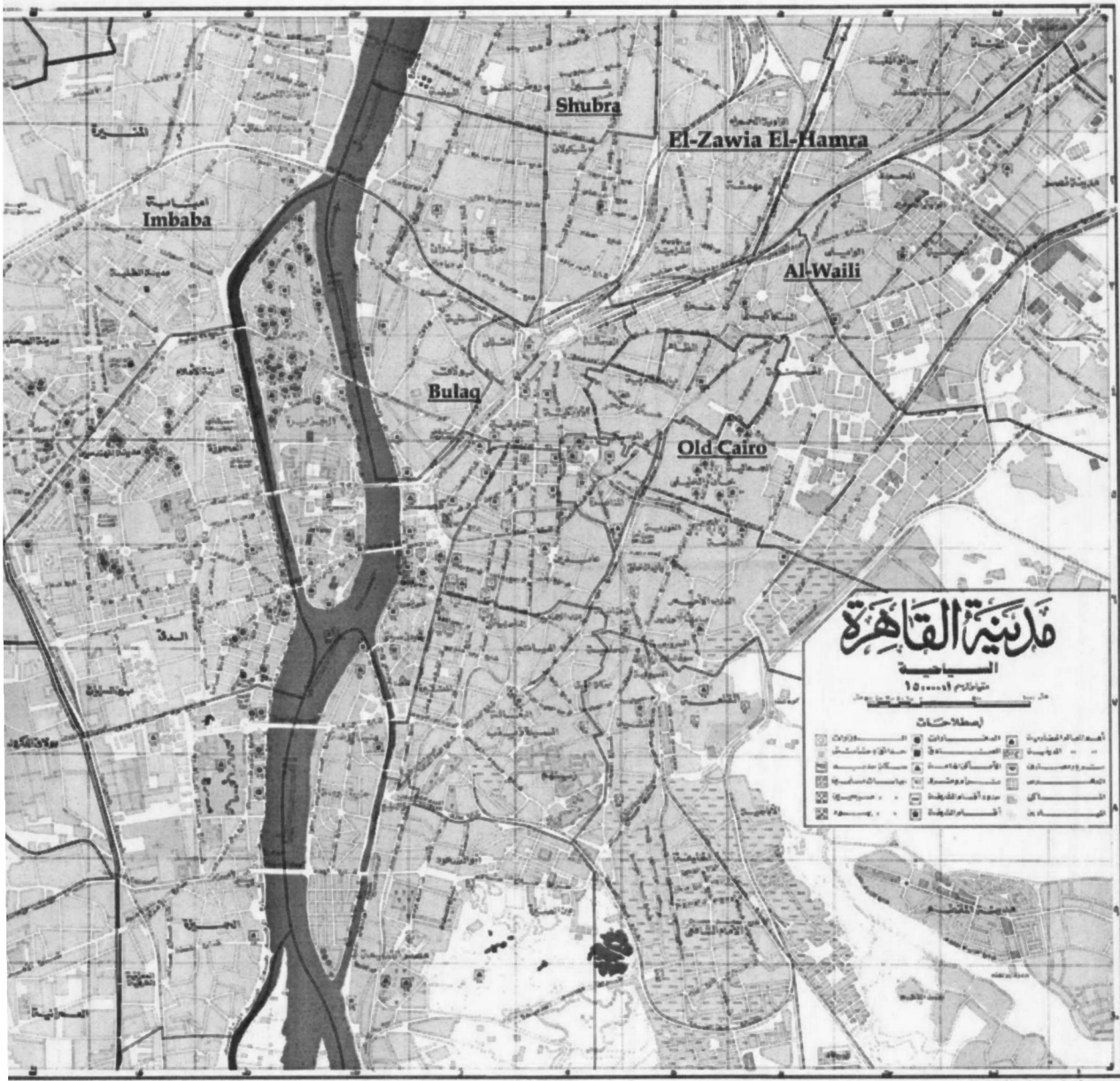
Education Level	Male (%)	Female(%)	Total
Illiterate	14.98	23.87	38.85
Reads & Writes	14.50	9.65	24.15
Primary Education (only)	5.37	4.6	9.97
Intermediate	14.67	9.91	24.58
University	1.78	0.35	2.13
N/A	0.17	0.15	0.32
Total	51.47	48.53	100

Source: CAPMAS (1991) the population census 1986.

Different levels of education can be found among the populations of the two areas. Nearly 39 percent of the population of Al-Ameria are illiterate with women making up almost two thirds of them.

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<sup>1</sup> The detailed results on these issues of 1996 census are not available yet; therefore we will depend on the results of the last census.



Map 4.1 Cairo, El-Zawia El-Hamra





p 4.2 Cairo, Al-Ameria

Table 4.2 Distribution by education in El-Zawia (percentage to total population)

Education Level	Male (%)	Female(%)	Total
Illiterate	10.23	19.64	29.87
Reads & Writes	16.40	11.93	28.33
Primary Education (only)	3.63	3.34	6.97
Intermediate	18.13	12.56	30.69
University	2.96	0.72	3.68
N/A	0.23	0.23	0.46
Total	51.58	48.42	100

Source: CAPMAS (1991) the population census 1986.

Educational differences are also apparent among the population of Al-Zawia, yet it is slightly better off when compared to Al-Ameria, especially on the issue of illiteracy.

Official statistics estimate the economically active population at 31.64 percent of the population in Al-Ameria (27.07 percent male and 4.57 percent female). For El-Zawia the figures are 30.86 percent, 27.65 percent male and 3.21 percent female respectively (CAPMAS 1991), bearing in mind the unreliability of these statistical data (as discussed in Chapter Three).

A mixture of economic activities co-exists in the areas. Many industries exist in and around the two areas. The large factories, mainly public sector, specialise in textile and garments and dairy products. There is also one large biscuit factory and several other factories working in pharmaceuticals. Other industries are generally small-scale usually based in workshops of various sizes and at home. There are such crafts as shoemaking and repair, wooden furniture making, and tailoring.

Commercial activities exist in the two areas. Several markets, specialising in selling vegetables and food produce, construction materials, hardware items, and clothes are active.

The women petty-traders that we investigated worked in two local markets, namely, El-Zawia market and Al-Ameria market. These were the largest markets in the corresponding areas. In the following section we consider these two markets. The first part gives a brief historical background to the establishment of the markets followed by a description of the organisation and structure of the markets.

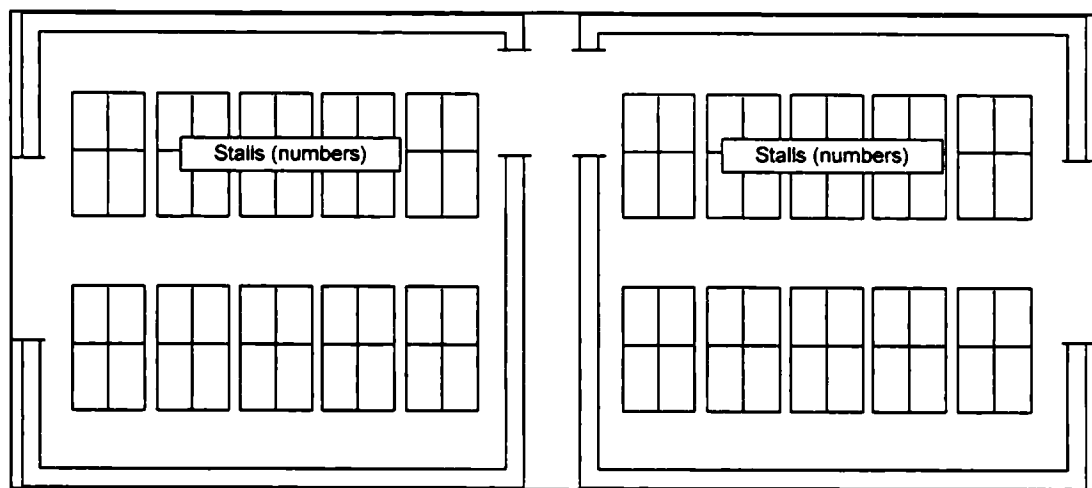


Figure 4.1 Layout of Al-Zawia Market

### 3.2. The Markets

Markets in Cairo vary in size and layout with no pattern common to all. Yet the two markets under study had evolved along similar lines, dictated by the available space, accessibility and mobility and enforced by the municipality.

Both markets were officially established during the period between 1968 and 1970 by local municipalities. Like many markets in Cairo<sup>2</sup>, both markets were initiated when a few traders gathered informally and traded in the open. Later these sites were transformed into marketplaces and attracted more traders. Each trader claimed and assumed authority over a certain spot in the market. Once a trader established himself in the market, his right over the space was

<sup>2</sup> See for example the study of squatter markets in Cairo by Helmi Tadros *et al.* (1990)

recognised by the rest of the traders and it would have been very difficult to move him out. Moreover, this claim was extended to his family through inheritance.

In the early 1970s the government decided to organise and supervise the markets promising the traders to upgrade the facilities by providing electricity and water. In both markets, the actual work undertaken was limited to providing a ground slab, a light metal roofing, fixed cement stalls, and sometimes a surrounding block wall. No other services were provided. However, a rent was introduced at the average monthly rate of LE4 (a great sum of money in those days). Those who could not afford the rent were forced to move out of the built-area where they established peripheral trading zones in close proximity to the market walls. Their evacuated stalls were sold by auction to other traders.

The stalls were also numbered and registered by the municipality. On registration, a trader would be entitled to a loan of LE1000-3000 at an interest rate of 2.5 percent per annum by the governmental bank with his trading stand as collateral. The trading license is issued for life and costs LE140-200 in addition to the monthly rent mentioned.

The streets surrounding the markets are also used as marketing area. There are a number of small shops which sell fruit and vegetables, grocery staples, plastic products and clothes. Other traders, predominantly women, just lay their stock in big baskets on the street.

### **3.2.1 El-Zawia Market**

The market (fig. 4.1) is made up of two separate sections, each 4 stalls-wide by 10 stalls long, comprising a total of 80 stalls (also called *numbers*). Stalls have an area of three m<sup>2</sup>, each four stalls clustered together with one metre wide alleys separating them. There are no shops in the market. The market also has two metre high walls and four gates that are closed during the night. The market has a toilet for the use of traders.

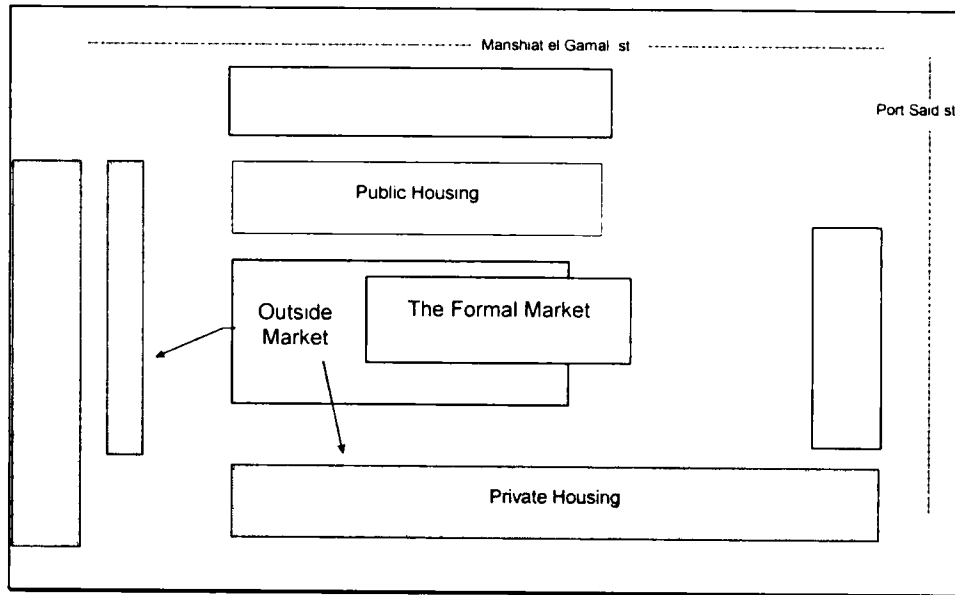


Figure 4.2 Location of El-Zawia market

Over the years, a peripheral trading area has emerged around the market. Now the market (see fig. 4.2) can be thought of as two adjacent markets, the *inside* and the *outside*. When the government raised the rent to LE25.50 a month, traders disputed this high amount and have not paid rent for a number of years; this has engaged them in a dispute with the municipality. As a result, many traders left their stalls in the *inside* market and moved to the *outside*, they still use their stalls as storage areas. As a result, the *outside* market is now the active market, where 30 men and 90 women trade. Each has to pay 50 piasters daily to the guards.

### 3.2.2 Al-Ameria Market

This market (fig. 4.3) is composed of a long isle with trading stalls (*numbers*) on both sides. Alleys of 1m width define the trading stands. The latter constitute forty independent units which are approximately three m<sup>2</sup> in area. Beginning in the middle of the market we find a number of shops. The market has no walls or gates so entry to and exit from the market is not controlled. However, shops surrounding the market allow for few access points for

loading and unloading inside the market. Hence, traders along the market boundaries (shop owners) have a marked advantage over their counterparts inside the market.

Until recently, power lines were drawn from streetlights without approval from the municipality. In 1986, the local municipality recognised the illegal appropriation of electricity by the traders and introduced electricity meters for the market, the sum of which was to be proportioned amongst the beneficiaries. There are no places that sell food to traders and no toilet inside the market. Cleaning is undertaken by the municipality but the traders have to pay a daily sum for the cleaning staff.

In 1994, the local municipality raised the rent to LE22. The traders collectively refused to conform and pay the rent, arrears accumulated and finally the dispute was settled and a daily levy of LE1.00, collected by an employee of the municipality, was introduced to be deducted from the accumulated monthly rent.

Traders inside the market are predominantly males or family-based businesses. The few female owners are mainly widows who inherited the stand from their husbands.

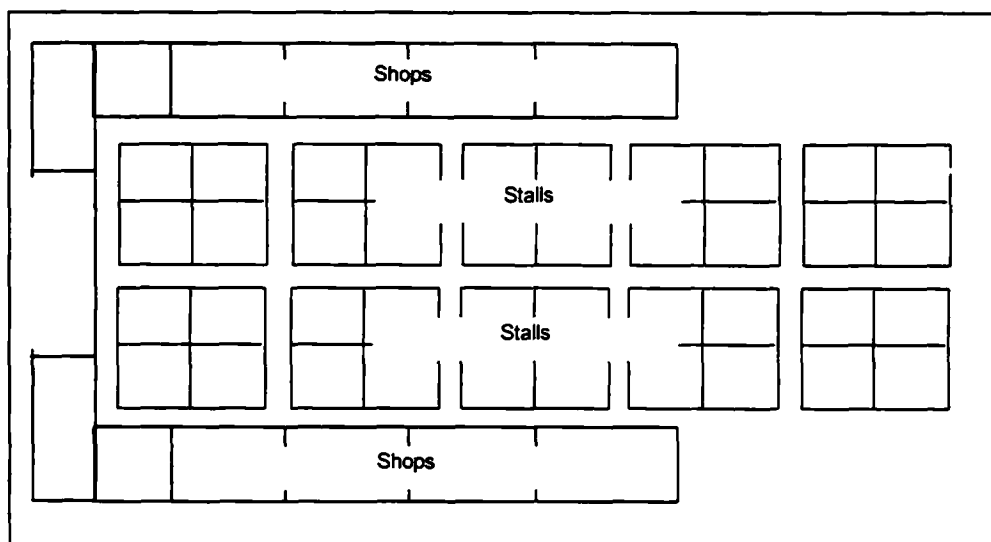


Figure 4. 3 Layout of Al-Ameria market

Like the case of El-Zawia, another peripheral market (fig. 4.4) grew around the government built one. About 30 women petty-traders are situated around the market walls and at their entrances; they mainly sell vegetables. There are also vendors who serve tea to customers and traders; prepared and processed food and beverages are also sold in the outside market. Before 1990, the trading was considered illegal by the municipality and traders' merchandise was regularly confiscated by the authorities. However, from 1990 onwards, they were 'informally' allowed to trade freely without registration. Their claim to their spots for selling was guaranteed by paying an informal daily levy of 50 piasters to the 'market watchman'.

On the main road across Al-Ameria market a number of traders are situated with their stock laid in baskets or mats. These are mainly from the countryside who come for a day's sale and do not keep a fixed selling position. They suffer from continuous raids by the authorities who confiscate their merchandise. However, these frequent incidents do not discourage them from reclaiming their positions once the authorities leave.

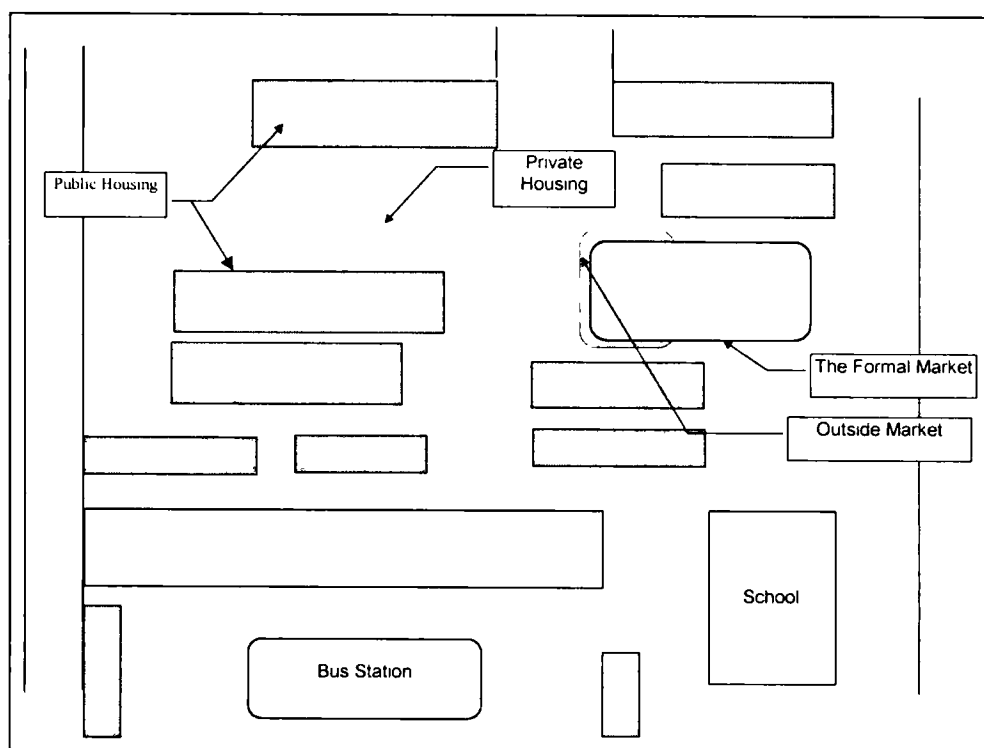


Figure 4.4 Location of Al-Ameria market

The largest group of traders within the interior of the market is fruit and vegetable sellers. They are located in the middle area of the market. On the east side, along the edges of the market, are traders selling various kinds of fresh food including poultry, meat, and eggs. A few scattered traders specialising in grocery items and non-food items such as kitchen utensils, plastic products are found within the interior of the market.

In both cases, the outside market attracts most of the customers due to its accessibility from the main roads. Many traders inside the market complain that the increasing number of street sellers around the market has taken away their customers. As a result, some of the *inside* traders moved to the outside market because they would have a better selling spot there.

Traders in both markets obtain their stock on credit from wholesalers who bring the produce to market on a daily basis. However, some traders buy produce from larger wholesale markets located on the outskirts of Cairo such as the markets of Mustorod and Al-Obour. The latter, however, is only accessed by large traders. Disputes are resolved internally by older traders who arbitrate between disputing parties.

The various means of displaying goods reflect the status of a trader. Some traders use stalls, others, especially those who cannot afford the rent, lay out their goods in baskets or on mats and rugs. The latter are less well established.

#### **4. The Sample and Sampling**

A sample of 100 working women was chosen based on "purposive sampling", 50 from each neighbourhood. In purposive sampling respondents are selected according to certain criteria set by the researcher. Hence, it is not strictly possible to generalise from such sample, nonetheless, it is likely that the results can be found in other instances (Bouma 1993:119).



As with the choice of the study areas, the availability of women who fell in the designated groups and were willing to participate was a determinant in choosing the 100 women questioned. The sampling was limited further by the fact that some women especially home-based producers would not reveal home production activities to strangers for fear of taxes or regulatory authorities. The presence of key informants/contacts within the areas was essential to be able to conduct the research. In that respect, the sample should not be perceived as representative.

In selecting women petty-traders, we have considered the different locations of their activity, that is *inside* and *outside* the established market in the two areas selected. Given the fact that the majority women worked outside the market, nearly 80 percent of our petty-trader respondents were among these.

#### 4.1. The Main Characteristics of the Sample

The main characteristics of our sample can be classified as follows; in terms of work location home-based producers (45 percent), and petty-traders (55 percent). The majority of women in both groups (60 percent) work on their own, while the rest (40 percent) work in family enterprises.

Table 4.3 Age, education, marital status, and number of children (all women in the sample)

(a) Age

15-25 (%)	26-35 (%)	36-45 (%)	46 + (%)
19	29	27	25

(b) Marital status

Single (%)	Married (%)	Divorced (%)	Widowed (%)
11	70	3	16

(c) Level of education

Illiterate (%)	Read & write (%)	-5 yrs. schooling (%)	+5 yrs. Schooling (%)
70	11	3	16

(d) Number of children

No children (%)	1-3 (%)	4-6 (%)	7-9 (%)
13	32	44	11

Table 4.3 (a) and (b) give information on age and marital status. Working women are mainly concentrated in the age group 26-45 (56 percent). Women-headed households represented 19 percent of our sample, most of those are widows rather than divorced.

Table 4.3 (c) shows that the vast majority of the sample were illiterate which corresponds to the general trends of illiteracy on the national level (Chapter Five). Section (d) indicates that 87 percent of the women, had borne children. Women in our sample tended to have a high number of children, this can be related to high levels of illiteracy among these women.

The sub-sample consisted of 22 family-based households drawn from the original sample based on the couple's consent to be interviewed. Only ever married women were included at this stage. In what follows an outline of the sub-sample's characteristics is presented.

Table 4.4 Household composition of the sub-sample

Cases	Home-based producers				Petty-traders			
	Husband Age	Wife Age	No. of Children	Years of Marriage	Husband Age	Wife Age	No. of Children	Years of Marriage
1	-+	58	3		40	38	7	21
2	34	29	2	7	19	19	0	1
3	31	33	2	5	51	41	6	24
4	45	40	4	23	-*	34	2	10
5	65	54	4	37	35	30	4	7
6	43	44	3	18	37	27	2	12
7	40	32	3	16	35	28	4	12
8	39	35	2	5	-+	52	4	33
9	36	28	2	8	60	50	9	30
10	45	40	4	16	45	37	6	21
11	55	41	3	17	30	25	4	7

+ widow. \* divorcee

All of the 22 households with the exception of three were nuclear families. The other three were female-headed households. One of those was an old woman, living with her son and daughter, and the other two were living with relations while keeping their own economic independence. The latter two cases reflect the social norm in these areas in which young women, widows or divorcees, are not allowed to live alone with their offsprings, yet are required to support themselves financially.

In our sample, a prototypical woman petty-traders is 38 years old, married with 4.2 children, more likely to be illiterate and most likely to be selling vegetables. A prototypical woman home-based producer is 36, married with 3 children. She has received few years of education and is more likely to work as a seamstress.

## **5. Methods of Data Collection**

The actual fieldwork was carried out in the workplace of women respondents in the two groups. Thus, home-based producers were interviewed in their homes, whereas petty-traders were interviewed in the market. Women petty-traders, in the sub-sample, were also interviewed in their homes.

The study adopted a combination of methods for data collection. The necessity for a multiplicity of methods stems from the broad set of goals that we intend to cover. Many writers have emphasised the importance of using different methods to verify the findings and improve their reliability (Creswell 1994).

The research was undertaken in two phases. The first was a survey with a structured questionnaire which provided the sample frame from which a sub-sample was drawn. The questionnaire was administered to all women (100) in our sample. This method was essential to make statistical comparison between women in the two groups.

The second stage were in-depth interviews, and direct observation. We have also collected a few life and work histories of women in the sub-sample. Our aim was to capture the complexities and dynamics of relationships within the household in addition to covering additional areas not obtainable by the survey.

## **5.1. The Survey**

The questionnaire developed for this phase was administered only to women respondents. It was divided into two parts: the first, contained questions related to social and demographic characteristics of the women respondents. These included questions on marital status, age, education, and place of economic activity. Questions concerned with educational attainment and employment status of husbands' or fathers'/brothers', in the case of unmarried women, were also included.

The second part, contained the scales designed to measure marital power within the household. The scale, as shown above, was based on a number of indicators, each of which was reflected by a question in the questionnaire.

## **5.2. In-depth Study**

Recognising the importance of approaching issues of power relations, and control within the household from various directions, in-depth interviews and direct observation offered other methods to tackle these issues. A structured questionnaire risks losing the rich complexity of ordinary life in the search for a data set which collects similar information from each respondents in a form which can be readily coded and analysed. Complicated issues such as distribution of power within marriage are not easily examined by means of such tool (Pahl 1989:180).

The in-depth study, the second stage of the fieldwork, was carried out on a sub-sample of 22 households drawn from the original sample (100). The sub-sample was divided equally between women petty-traders and home-based producers. This phase attempted to explore, in detail, the complexities and dynamics of relationships within the household. The study considered themes such as domestic budgets, intra-household resource allocations, decision-making, and issues relating to women's work. In this stage, the husbands of women in the sub-sample were also interviewed.

Two semi-structured questionnaires were developed; one for each partner. The interviews were conducted in the workplace and the couples were interviewed separately. By interviewing both the husband and wife it was possible to compare their responses to similar questions, and to reduce the bias which may occur if only one person is interviewed. Thus, interviewing husband and wife provided us with a more complete picture of the division of labour in the household.

One main difficulty we met in the course of conducting our fieldwork was interviewing the husbands, especially those of home-based producers. In some cases men refused to be interviewed by a woman, thus a male interviewer carried out the interview. Others refused to be interviewed separately, thus being alone in a room with a woman, so somebody had to attend, usually the wife.

The questionnaires covered the same three broad areas identified in the scale. They contained questions related to women's work, household budgeting, housework, family planning and childcare, and finally partners' attitudes to gender roles and women's work.

Each woman respondent was visited at home at least once to complete the questionnaire. In the case of petty-traders, a number of visits to the two markets were undertaken in order to collect more information and make observations of the actual trading mechanics in the market.

The interviews were not tape recorded since all the respondents were reluctant and refused to be taped. We simply noted answers to the questions, writing down comments from respondents. In some cases, when writing down the answers was interrupting the flow of the conversation, it was completed after the interview.

One of the major difficulties in conducting the research stemmed from the sensitivity of the issues addressed; namely private marital relations and informal economic activities. At the beginning, people were reluctant to

discuss some aspects which they considered private. However, as time passed, trust was built along with a number of close friendships with some of the women, which helped removing the suspicion and encouraging more active participation.

Finally, despite making a great effort to explain my research and its purpose, some people exaggerated the drudgery of their lives and assumed that I could intervene in their favour with the authorities or provide aid.

In the following three chapters, we present a picture of the lives of the women in the two groups. Through the discussion of our findings, the nature and dynamics of their work, the household organisation, and those factors that shape their lives and perception are examined and contrasted.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE WORK

[...] once women got married, little of what they did got recorded apart from giving birth to children and eventually dying. (Pahl 1984:70)

In developing economies, use values are frequently transformed into exchange values at times of crisis [...] What is important is not whether activities themselves are productive or unproductive and generic of use or exchange values, since the same tasks can be either or none of these at different times but rather, the relationships through which the work is carried out are critical. Cooking might be seen as 'reproductive' when provided for family maintenance but enters into the sphere of exchange if prepared food is sold on the street. (Redclift 1985:97)

#### 1. Introduction

Employment is one form of work. Emphasis on *employment* excludes a broad range of economic activities which are not recorded in official statistics. Much of the work carried out by women in developing countries falls in this category. Thus women's participation in economic activity is in the main unrecorded (Brydon and Chant 1989:26).

Emphasis on employment as the only significant form of work tends to highlight the individual earner rather than the household as an economic unit. It is well known that low-income households cannot be adequately maintained on the wage of a single earner. Most of these households seek to diversify their sources of income in the form of a second job for the head of the household, other members working for income, or household members collaborating in productive work at home, such as sewing and repairing, preparing food for sale on the street, or artisan activities. In such households

women make a significant contribution to household income both as unpaid household labourers and as money earners (Pahl 1984:84).

This chapter considers the working lives of women in petty-trading and home-based petty-production. These two occupation are usually unrecorded and thus are part of the *informal* sector.

It has been argued that there are strong similarities in the areas of informal work in which women engage in developing countries. Firstly, their work is usually situated within or very near their home. Secondly, the nature of the work is similar in content to the work women performed in their homes: laundering, sewing, food preparation and the like (Brydon and Chant 1989; and Young 1993).

This view holds true for both women petty-traders and home-based producers in our sample. However, the diversity found in women's economic activities reveals that these are not a simple reflection of their domestic role. Some activities such as trading may require different skills that are neither an extension of housework nor developed at home (Babb 1989: 198).

This chapter investigates the extent to which the organisation of women's work in both groups affects the degree of their control and command over their work, and the gender division of labour within the household. The chapter is divided into three parts.

The first part compares the characteristics of working women as well as that of their work. This includes personal characteristics: age, educational level, and number of children, as well as the types of work, earning levels, work duration and reasons for taking up paid work.

The second part presents a detailed description of the work performed by women in both groups. It examines several aspects of women's work such as the nature and logistics of the work, work conditions and relations, and the problems that women encounter in their work.



The third part compares patterns of decision-making on work related issues within the household. These include decisions about place and duration of work, work arrangements and the organisation of work.

## 2. Characteristics of Working Women and Their Work

### 2.1. Personal Characteristics

This section compares the personal characteristics of women petty-traders and home-based producers in the sample. Our aim is to investigate whether factors such as age, level of education and number of children influence women's choice of the type of economic activity in which they engage.

#### 2.1.1 Age

Table 5.1 The age of the women in the sample by place of work

Age	women petty-traders (N) 55		Home-based producers (N) 45	
	Number	%	Number	%
15-25	9	16.4	10	22.2
26-35	17	30.9	12	26.7
36-45	15	27.3	12	26.7
46+	14	25.5	11	24.4

In the sample, 19 percent of the women are between 15 and 25 years of age, 56 percent between 26 and 45, and 25 percent above 46. Table 5.1 shows that the distribution of age groups between women petty-traders and home-based producers is more or less the same.

The notion that women usually withdraw from the labour market during child-bearing and rearing is refuted as nearly 75 per cent of women in the sample are within the reproductive age group. Nearly all women respondents explain that they stopped working at the time of childbirth for only a short period, normally ranging from two to four weeks.

Many studies have shown that women's attitudes to work have changed. Women who previously opted to leave their jobs upon marriage now continue working, It is said that economic hardship forces these women to stay in their jobs (CAPMAS 1992:18).

### 2.1.2 Education

Table 5.2 Educational level of women by place of work

Level of education	Women petty-traders (N) 55		home-based producers (N) 45	
	N	%	N	%
Illiterate	50	90.9	20	44.4
Reads writes	2	3.6	9	20.0
Less than 5 yrs. Schooling	1	1.8	2	4.4
More than 5 yrs. Schooling	2	3.6	14	31.1

In the current sample, there is a high proportion of illiteracy (70 percent), which conforms to the general trend in levels of literacy among Egyptian women at the national level. The 1986 census data indicate that the overall literacy rate among Egyptians was 51 percent. The literacy rate was lower amongst women, at 38.2 percent, while than amongst men 62.2 percent (CAPMAS 1992:10).

Table 5.2 shows a clear difference between women petty-traders and home-based producers in the level of education. The vast majority of women petty-traders are illiterate whereas fewer than half the home-based producers are so.

Although their work does not require any particular level of educational attainment, a high proportion of women home-based producers had completed between 5-10 years schooling. One explanation may be that the nature of their economic activity attracts relatively more literate and educated women. Having been denied a 'proper' job that suits their education, these women seek what they define as a more 'respectable' income generating opportunities.

It is useful to compare the educational level of these women with that of their male counterparts within the household. The following table presents the level of education for husbands (in the case of married women) and brothers (in the case of unmarried ones).

Table 5.3 Educational level of husband or brother by women's place of work

Level of education	Women petty-traders (N) 55		Home-based producers (N) 45	
	N	%	N	%
Illiterate	38	69.1	17	37.8
Reads & writes	10	18.2	9	20.0
Less than 5 yrs. Schooling	3	5.5	1	2.2
More than 5 yrs. Schooling	4	7.3	18	40.0

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 indicate very little overall difference in the educational level between couples among home-based producers, though husbands/brothers had on average slightly more years of education. They also show that there is a greater difference in the level of literacy between couples among women petty-traders. It can be seen from Table 5.3 that the husbands/ brothers in the former group are, on average, more educated than those in the latter.

It is clear that the two groups of women belong to different social strata as revealed by their different level of education. Husbands' occupation is another indicator which confirms such differentiation. While the majority of women petty-traders' husbands (60 percent) are engaged in unskilled jobs (for example traders, and night-watchmen), more than 40 percent of home-based producers' husbands are found either in skilled occupations or in low-salaried government jobs.

### 2.1.3 Number of Children

Table 5.4 Number of children by women's place of work

No. of Children	Petty-traders (N) 55		Home-based producers (N) 45	
	N	%	N	%
No children	3	5.5	10	22.2
1-3	15	27.3	17	37.8
4-6	30	54.5	14	31.1
7-9	7	12.7	4	8.9

In the sample, 87 percent of the women had children. Table 5.4 shows that 32 percent of all women have between 1 and 3 children, 44 percent between 4 and 6, and 11 percent between 7 and 9. Of the 39 percent who have school-age children, 19 percent are home-based producers and 20 percent are petty-traders.

Fertility levels are higher among women petty-traders, who have an average of 4.2 children, as compared to 3 children for each woman of the home-based producers. This finding may be related to the women's level of education, although the literature shows mixed evidence of this issue. Many studies, however, show that women's level of education has an effect on their fertility (for example Nawar *et al.* 1995).

Another significant observation in most of the households under study is the importance attached to the education of children by women in both groups. In general, the sons and daughters of respondents remained in school at least until the end of primary education. Children contribute to their mothers' work but such help is reserved for the summer holidays.

## 2.2. General Characteristics of Women's Work

### 2.2.1 Women's Current Occupation

Table 5.5 Women's occupation by place of work

Occupation	women petty-traders (N) 55		Occupation	Home-based producers (N) 45	
	N	%		N	%
Vegetable	28	50.9	Tailoring/needle work	20	44.5
Cooked food	3	5.5	Crafts work	10	22.2
Non-food products	8	14.5	Cooking food	5	11.1
Poultry	11	20.0	Raising chicken	5	11.1
Bread	2	3.6	Private tutoring	2	4.4
Beverages	3	5.5	Services for others	3	6.7

In the sample, 50 percent of women petty-traders specialise in selling fresh vegetables. Some (nearly 25 percent) sell other kinds of fresh food including poultry, eggs and cooked food. Others sell non-food items such as plastic products, clothes, matches and rope. Finally, there are those who sell bread and beverages such as tea (around nine percent).

Tailoring and needlework are the most common occupations among women home-based producers (44.5 percent). The production of simple goods, such as baskets, pottery or soap are secondary (22.2 percent). Cooking food and breeding chickens for sale are also common occupations (nearly 22 percent). Some women (6.7 percent) provide certain services such as midwifery and hairdressing. Only a small percentage of these women are engaged in private tutoring inside their homes (4.4 percent). This last occupation is not very common among women in our sample as it requires a higher level of education.

Of all the women in the sample, 60 percent work independently while the rest work in family enterprises. The percentage of home-based producers working in a family enterprise is much higher (62 percent) than that of petty-traders (21 percent). Among the home-based producers, a few women are piece-rate workers.

A large proportion of the respondents have no formal training. The majority of women petty-traders acquired the skills needed through their family (from their mothers or their relatives). The same applies for some of the home-based producers while the rest either learned their skills on a former job or taught themselves.

### **2.2.2 Work Motivation**

The interview findings reveal that the decision to seek paid work in the first instance is, in most cases, a response to economic hardship. Women in both groups for seeking paid work cite the need to maintain their families either totally or partially. None of the respondents mentioned the urge for

self-realisation or improving their socio-economic status as motives for seeking income-generating activities.

When asked why they had selected their current occupation, a large proportion of women reported that it was the only available option, or the only work they knew. Family involvement, lack of required skills, and the flexible hours of work which allowed them to combine paid with domestic work, were other reasons for taking up a specific occupation.

For home-based producers, a common reason was the location of the activity within their home. Status was another important factor in influencing women's choice of paid work. Some women considered certain occupations as maids and traders, for example as 'degrading' for themselves and for their families, and thus refused to engage in such occupations.

### **2.2.3 Work Duration (Stability)**

The majority of women in the sample had done regular paid work at some point in their lives. Only a few reported that they started work after marriage.

Work duration for women petty-traders was found to be longer than that of home-based women producers. More than 50 percent of women petty-traders (who are above 36 years old) had worked between 20 and 30 years, whereas only 20 percent of home-based women producers (of the same age group), had worked for the same period. Almost all women petty-traders reported that they had worked all their lives and started at an early age.

In the case of women home-based producers, some had worked for an employer on a regular basis before moving into their current occupation. Others had withdrawn from work after marriage and, a few years later, started working once again inside their homes. Some women took up paid work only after marriage as a response to a particular crisis or change in circumstances. Those who either changed or left their jobs reported that it was mainly because of their husband's objections to work outside the household.

#### **2.2.4 Work Conditions**

Most women reported that they experience great difficulty in obtaining the necessary working capital to start a business. Being poor, these women are denied access to credit as they do not have any collateral for guaranteeing loans. Personal savings, borrowing from relatives or friends, selling belongings such as gold, or joining informal saving clubs are the main ways of raising the start-up capital as women respondents reported.

The amount of capital needed to start a business varies among women in both groups depending on the scale of operation and the nature of their work. In general, petty-trading requires working capital for day to day functioning. However, the size of capital required ranges from almost nil, as in the case of an individual petty trader who obtains her merchandise on credit, to a larger amount, as in the case of family enterprise traders who pay rent for their stalls and pay in cash for their stock. It also varies depending on the type of merchandise and whether the traders make daily, weekly or monthly purchases.

In the case of home-based producers the situation is different. For example, tailoring appears to be the activity which calls for the largest investment. Start-up capital is needed to buy equipment for the project such as a sewing machine. Also, the running cost of the operation tends to be higher than that incurred by their trader counterparts. The additional expenses include rent, raw materials, maintenance and spare parts. In some cases, larger scale producers pay wages for piece-rate workers whom they employ temporarily to meet a deadline.

Long hours seem to be the most common characteristic of work in both groups, whether the women are on their own or in family enterprises. The normal day does not end with economic activity as they still have household chores. The women surveyed spend between six and eight hours a day in economic activity and another three to four hours in domestic work including

childcare. Some work nine to 12 hours a day while others especially those with younger children, may go up to 13 to 16 hours.

Home-based producers suffer even more because of the overlap between economic activities and domestic responsibilities. Business operations are regularly interrupted by childcare, food preparation, and cleaning. Women petty-traders benefit from the separation between the two spheres of paid work and housework. So while home-based producers engage in both types of work at all times, their trader counterparts spend the daytime in the market and take up their household duties in the evening.

The findings also reveal that most women in the sample worked throughout the year (12 months) with only a few days off. Others, mainly seamstresses working at home, worked most of the year (nine to 10 months) because their work depended on the season.

### **2.2.5 Work Constraints (Problems)**

The problems faced by women in their work are activity specific. However, lack of capital and long hours of work are major problems faced by women in both groups. Women complained of fatigue and health problems because of their workload.

Home-based women producers suffer mainly from problems of input supplies whether they are unavailable or at cost that cannot be afforded. In some cases, they face problems in selling their products. Lack of workspace is one of the major problems that these women encounter. One -or two -room dwelling units are used for living, working, and sleeping. In addition, lack of help in the household is an important problem; finally most women complained of work-related physical ailments such as hand and neck strains as well as recurring headaches.

The major problem that women petty-traders reported was failing to sell their merchandise and thus being unable to repay their debts to the wholesalers.



The situation is worse for those who sell perishable stock because the failure to sell can break the cycle by which they obtain fresh supplies on credit. Harassment by the authorities is a recurrent complaint among traders who sell their goods in the street. Women traders with young children usually bring them to the marketplace and look after them while working.

#### **2.2.6 Level of Income<sup>1</sup>**

Here we will consider both individual woman's earnings as well as the total household income. Variations in earnings between women petty-traders and home-based producers may be attributed to the duration of work, nature and quantity of goods and scale of operation. It is important to note that household monthly income varies within the same activity depending on the scale of the operation.

The daily net income of women petty-traders ranged from LE5 to LE10 (LE150 to LE300 monthly). The lowest income (LE150 to LE180 per month) was earned by five women who worked on their own. One of these women was the head of the household. Only one woman earned LE300 per month. In the five cases in which trading is a family business, the women worked without pay.

Monthly income among home-based producers also ranged from LE150 to LE300. Three women in this group earned the lowest income (LE150); two were piece-rate workers and one was a widow. Three individual home-based producers earned between LE250 and LE300 per month. In five cases where the couples operated a small family enterprise, women were unpaid.

In almost all the 22 households women earned less than their husbands. In only one case among home-based producers, the woman earned nearly double what her husband earned, as he was partially disabled.

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<sup>1</sup> The data in this section is based only on our sub-sample of 22 households, since the question about household income was not included in the main questionnaire.

Table 5.6 Total household income in the sub-sample

Monthly income LE	Women petty-traders	Home-based petty-producers
200 and below	3	1
201-300	1	1
301-400	4	-
401-500	1	3
501-600	1	5
601-700	1	1

Table 5.6 shows that the total household monthly income for the 22 households in the study varied between LE150 and LE700. The lowest income, varying between LE150 and LE300, was earned by six families, four of whom were women petty-traders' households. Four of the petty-traders' households had an income of LE300 to LE400. The highest income range of LE400 to LE700 was enjoyed by twelve households, nine of which were home-based producers' households. Ten of these twelve households were family enterprises. It is clear that the highest income among petty-traders as well as home-based producers was enjoyed by family enterprises.

These figures are better understood when compared with that of other economic sectors in Egypt. In this respect, we will depend on two types of wage standards. These are the legal minimum wage<sup>2</sup>, and the average weekly wage in public and private formal sector establishments.

Our findings show that that the average monthly income of women in both groups exceeded this minimum wage. Many studies of the informal sector in Egypt confirm this finding (for example, CAPMAS 1985; Al-Mahdy and Mashour 1992; and Tadros *et al.* 1990).

If we compare the average weekly wage of our respondents with the average weekly wage in the public and private sectors at the national level, using the figures estimated in the "Employment, Wages and Hours of Work" bulletin (EWHW 1994), published by CAPMAS (1996b:4), which is LE82 per week.

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<sup>2</sup> The minimum wage level settled at LE35 monthly in 1988, covering the minimum level requirement necessary for living as determined by national official figures (Al-Mahdy 1995).

Individual women's income, whether among petty-traders or home-based producers, in the lowest income category in our sample was 40 percent less than the average weekly wage. The rest of the income categories in the sample exceeded the average wage mentioned above.

It must be noted here that the figures in EWHW wage statistics have a major shortcoming since they include only gross basic wage. Other allowances incentives and irregular bonuses are not included though they have become an integral part of the wage structure (Zaytoun 1991: 253). Similarly, government employees and those working in the formal private sector have many other benefits such as paid holidays, pension, and maternity leave. Women working in the informal sector lack such benefits, which makes their earnings lower.

Women's income in both groups fluctuates depending on the season. For petty-traders certain times of the year such as the month of Ramadan, and the seasons for various vegetables, are more profitable. A home-based seamstress is also likely to be busier on certain occasions such as before school and before the two major religious feasts.

### **3. The Working Lives of Women Petty-Traders**

Petty-trading is an important source of employment and income for poor women in Cairo. Women petty-traders selling vegetables on the streets in different areas of Cairo are a normal sight that a casual observer cannot miss. This section examines the main features of the work of women petty-traders and the various ways in which they organise their work.

In our sample, two types of petty-traders are found: first, those working on their own; and second, those working in family enterprises. There are differences between these two types in terms of work arrangements, what is sold and the scale of trade. Most individual woman petty-traders are involved in small-scale trading. They sell mainly on the streets around the marketplace,

and specialise in selling vegetables and processed food. On the other hand, petty-traders involved in family enterprises deal with a wider range of merchandise, are located inside the market where they rent a stall, and trade on a larger scale. The following examples illustrate these differences in detail.

### **3.1. Individual Petty-Traders**

**Um Salah**, is a 37-years-old petty-trader. She is married with four children, two of them aged between five and 10. She reads and writes. At the time of the interview she had been a trader for 30 years. She sells vegetables outside the marketplace and uses a basket to display her stock. She works for 12 hours a day in the markets.

Um Salah's husband is illiterate and also works as a petty-trader. He sells vegetables from a small cart inherited from his father. Before moving into petty-trading, he used to work in a factory. He works from six in morning till eight in the evening, moving from one site to the other. His main problem is police raids, because he does not have a license. He earns between LE5 and LE7 a day.

Vending is a family trade where skills needed for the work are taught or passed on from one generation to the next. Um Salah, like the majority of women petty-traders in the sample, started selling from an early age. She explained:

*I started this work when I was 7 years old. My mother used to take me with her and give me a little stock to sell. She taught me how to judge the quality, and how to prepare the goods for sale.*

The difficult part of trading is how to obtain goods on credit and acquire a selling place. However, it is much easier for those who started selling during their childhood to start working on their own than for those who started later in life. To start trading, one usually needs little or no capital in terms of tools and

merchandise. When asked how she began marketing and what difficulties she faced, Um Salah answered:

*In our work one needs little money. The tools I use in my work [a small scale, a knife, and a basket] I bought long ago in instalments. As for the stock, I got it on credit from a wholesaler. When I first moved to this area [after marriage] it was a bit difficult to acquire a selling place but my husband helped me as he lived all his life in the area and was a trader himself. I was lucky because at that time the market area was not crowded with sellers as today.*

All individual petty-traders rely on credit when it comes to buying merchandise. New sellers, especially if they have few contacts, find it difficult at the beginning. They usually depend on loans obtained from relatives. Sometimes they are introduced to wholesalers by a relative, or wholesalers might be willing to take a chance on them as potential new customers. It is worth noting that assistance is provided only on an individual basis, mainly through kinship and relatives. According to my respondent:

*The wholesaler I deal with offers goods on credit for two to three days, and I have to sell the stock and pay him back. [What if you do not repay him on time?] Usually he waits for another few days because he knows that I will pay. Some wholesalers do not wait and stop dealing with the trader.*

Almost all my respondents, men and women, do not record their dealings, as most of them are illiterate. They rely mainly on their memory for the quantities and prices of the items they buy. When disagreements occur between traders and wholesalers, the market “*sheikh*” is brought in to mediate such quarrels.

Tadros *et al.* (1990: 49) point out that the market in Cairo is a social place; economic exchange only emphasises social relations. Customers develop a certain loyalty to a particular vendor, and the vendors themselves prefer the regular to the casual customer. Trust is an essential component in marketing, as many operations involve delayed payments. Thus, the networks of traders and customers are built up largely on the basis of personal acquaintance. Most of Um Salah’s customers are regular ones who live in the area

surrounding the market. She treats them differently, sells to them on credit, advises them on what to buy, and provides special services for them (for example, cleaning the vegetables, and peeling peas).

When asked how much she earns, Um Salah replied:

*It depends on the time I spend in the marketplace and the amount I sell. I make between LE3 and LE5 daily. In the past there were official prices set and controlled by the government. Now it is different: we buy at wholesale prices and charge a little more on the quantity we sell.*

As Um Salah sells only vegetables, sometimes she has to lower her prices in order to sell the leftovers before they perish. For her this means incurring some losses.

Besides selling, petty-traders are also involved in activities such as sorting, cleaning, preserving, and generally looking after the goods they sell.

*After I bring fresh produce I start preparing it for sale which takes some time. I remove goods from sacks and sort through them to examine the quality and pick out any bad items. Then I arrange the goods carefully in my baskets and clean them at the same time. Some types of vegetable such as parsley and gargir [a kind of watercress] need more attention than others. I have to spray them with water, especially in hot weather to keep them fresh.*

Storage is a problem faced by traders, and those without a secure place to leave unsold goods in the market must take them home to ensure their safety.

Um Salah said:

*I cannot carry all the stuff back and forth home everyday. I pay 50 piasters to the caretaker in the market to look after my things.*

Um Salah is fully in charge of her work. She makes all the decisions regarding what and when to sell, arranges credit, and sells the merchandise. She is also in full control of her income. When asked if her husband interferes in her work, she said:

*I am here on my own and I should be able to deal with my problems and make my decisions. I cannot wait till I ask my husband. He has his own work to worry about.*

### **3.2. Petty-Trading Enterprise**

**Ahlam**, is a 38-year-old poultry seller. She is married and has seven children, four of whom go to school; the rest are of pre-school age. She is illiterate. Her husband is 40 years old. He completed his primary schooling and started working with his father selling poultry. When his father died he inherited the business.

Ahlam started selling at a very early age with her parents. After marriage, she started working with her husband. At the time of the interview she had been working with him for 20 years. She works for 12 hours in the market (8 a.m. to 8 p.m.). She brings her young children unless her elder children are on holiday and can look after them.

The husband's small shop is located at one end of the market. Inside the shop there are several big cages where they keep live chickens and feed them. At the end of the shop there is a big wooden table which is used to clean and cut the chicken. Beside the table is a large pot full of boiling water used for cleaning.

When couples work together in trading, there is a clear gender division of labour and responsibilities between them. Whether they sell vegetables, fruit, groceries or poultry, men are usually the ones who get the produce and women are mainly responsible for preparing it for sale as well as the actual selling.

When asked about her main responsibilities in the business, Ahlam reported that besides selling, usually when her husband is not around, she is also engaged in various other activities.

*When my husband brings the live chickens to the shop I have to feed them and give them water until it is time to prepare them for sale. Then I slaughter the chickens and clean them. I also clean the shop.*

Ahlam's husband explained that his main responsibility is to buy the live chickens and manage the financial aspects of the business such as dealing with the wholesaler, and buying the stock. He goes to a chicken farm or a wholesaler every two days to buy the stock. Usually he pays in cash; at other times, he pays part and the rest after sale. He considers himself the one responsible for the business and describes his wife as his 'assistant'. One of the main reasons for allowing his wife to work with him is to cut expenses:

*If she does not work with me then I have to employ someone to do the work and pay him a wage.*

Ahlam, confirmed her husband's answer and insisted that the business belonged to him. This situation holds true for most of the women who work in family enterprises. This can be seen clearly when considering who makes the daily decisions related to the business. In our case it is the husband who is in full control of the enterprise, including his wife's labour. Ahlam is also expected to give the money she receives to her husband at the end of the day.

With regard to business expenses, they pay LE22 monthly as rent for stalls within the marketplace, LE150 to LE200 for the stock (three times a week), and LE15 to LE20 for transport as the husband commutes to the farm to buy the stock. The couple make a net income of around LE600 a month.

One major difference between individual petty-traders and family enterprises is the scale of the operation. Our data reveal that family enterprises are usually larger and more successful. Those in larger operations do not work their way up through accumulating capital and evolving: most of them either have savings from a previous job or inherit the trade from their father or relatives. On the other hand, most individual petty-traders emphasise that



maintaining their trade at its present level is their main goal, whereas those operating enterprises aim at expanding their business.

It has been argued that male-assisted businesses are more successful because, according to Scott (1994:120), men have more ingredients of success, namely access to economic resources, mobility and flexibility.

It is important at this point to consider that, despite the lack of a rigid gender division of labour in the market, there is a good deal of overlap in the kind of commercial activities in which men and women participate. It is clear that the sale of some types of goods attracts women in much greater numbers than men, while other items draw more men than women. For example, the sale of meat and fruits are market items handled exclusively by men. Women working with their husbands in such trade are usually responsible for the selling end of the business; slaughtering livestock and butchering the meat for sale is ordinarily carried out by men. Preparation and sale of poultry, including slaughtering and cleaning, on the other hand, are women's responsibility as Ahlam's example shows.

Another division between men and women traders is that the scale of men's business is often larger than that of women's. The best and probably most important example, since it involves the largest group of traders, is the case of the vegetable sellers. The scale of men's trade, in most cases, is somewhat larger than that of women sellers of the same product. Finally, the wholesale trade is dominated exclusively by men.

#### **4. The Working Lives of Women Home-Based Producers**

This section discusses the organisation of work carried out by women inside their homes. Various ways of organising production as depicted in the study are presented below. Before proceeding to our discussion it is important to clarify some theoretical issues related to these forms of production.

Although family labour is one of the basic characteristics of small-scale production, little attention has been paid to the power relations and gender division of labour that underlie the internal labour processes (White 1994:147). Studies which identify the household as a locus of production may ignore both the heterogeneity within household organisation, the gender division of labour and its significance in shaping production and consumption practices (Feldman 1991:66). This has resulted from the fact that the analysis of relations within the household are separated from that of market relations beyond the border of the household (Lem 1991:106).

In her analysis of household-based enterprises, Whitehead explains:

In these economies, the conjugal contract includes the exchange of labour in production as well as the exchanges in which personal and collective consumption needs, including the feeding, the maintenance of children, are met. Here the arrangement within the conjugal contract is not separate from the way in which the labour is rewarded, or from the distribution of products of work, which in market economies by contrast take place outside the household and in the market. This is what makes the analysis of these relations a problem (1981:95).

According to Edholm *et al.* (1977:124) the gender division of labour within the household-based enterprises assigns separate tasks to each gender. The allocation of different tasks to men and women has implications for the organisation of the production process in that it involves issues of command and control. However, to see the gender division of labour merely in terms of participation in particular activities conceals inequalities in access to resources, control over labour and distribution of the product which are much more fundamental issues in the analysis.

Accordingly, emphasis in our analysis is placed on the labour process in economic activities, and the implications for the relations of control and command within the household. Gender ideologies governing the evaluation of the labour contribution of different household members are also considered

in the analysis. Finally, women's access to the outcome of work (rewards) is another area considered.

#### **4.1. Women in Home-Based Production**

Three ways of organising production are found in our study, namely: individual production, piecework production, and family enterprises. An example of each type is presented in the next section.

There are similarities between these forms of production. First is their spatial location, as they are situated in the household. Second is that they produce in response to product-orders placed from outside the household to avoid financial risks. In most cases, the person who orders an item supplies the materials. Alternately, the producer purchases the materials required in quantities sufficient to meet the order. In addition, the use of family labour is the basic characteristic of all these forms of production.

#### **4.2. Individual Women Producers**

The first type is an individual woman producing items that have been ordered mainly by other women (friends, neighbours or relatives). These items are directly sold from the woman's home. This type of activity includes sewing, knitting, and cooking.

**Amina**, a 40-years-old seamstress, sews mainly for her neighbours. She completed primary school. She married at 17 and has three sons and a daughter who are studying. Her husband is illiterate. He works in a laundry owned by his cousin. As he suffers from a mild mental disability, his income is very low (LE70 per month).

Amina decided to work because it was very difficult for the family to live on her husband's income. She described how she started work as follows:

*I thought of sewing because this is something I learned from my mother when I was young. I like sewing. Before starting the work I used to sew things for my children, then when I bought the machine I did few things as a trial for my relatives.*

When asked how she got the money to start her business, she reported :

*I borrowed the money to buy the sewing machine from my brother. It was not a lot of money. Of course the machine is giving me trouble now but I cannot afford to buy a new one.*

She has been working for 15 years. Her customers are women, mainly neighbours and friends. Sometimes the customers provide the material. At other times, Amina has to buy it along with other items that she needs in her work. When asked how she obtained these things, she replied:

*I get what I need from a wholesaler near by. Sometimes I do not find what I want there, so I buy from small shops in the neighbourhood. I usually get the material on credit and pay back when the customer pays me. If I have money I pay in cash.*

She pays between LE150 and 250 monthly for the material for her work and around LE10 for machine maintenance. Her net income is around LE300 per month.

Tailoring requires space but for Amina, as for most of the home-based producers, additional room is unaffordable. Her sewing machine is set up in the living room where the family eat and watch television. They live among the accumulated piles of garments, cloth and half-finished piece goods.

When asked about her work routine and how long she spends at her work, she answered:

*I don't know. Sewing is not the only thing I do, I have other things to do. I have to do the housework and to cook, so I cannot work continuously. I work for a while and leave the work when I have other things to do around the house. Sometimes if the*

*customer needs her order or when I have lots of work, I stay up the whole night to finish it.*

Amina works every day and she spends at least 4 to 5 hours at her work. Beside her work, she also provides other services for her customers such as going shopping with them and helping to choose the material. She also repairs their old clothes. She refers to these services as "favours" which she does for her friends. In return, her neighbours pay her for such services.

The best season for her work is religious feasts and marriages. For Amina, although it means more work, it also means more money coming in. On these occasions she turns to her daughter for help. She explains: *"I taught her how to do a few things, and she helps me, provided it does not affect her studying."*

When asked if her husband interferes in her work, Amina reported:

*He knows nothing about my work. I am the one who is responsible for everything such as getting the material, dealing with customers, and collecting the money.*

The only help her husband provides is to take the machine to be repaired or when it needs maintenance.

#### **4.3. Piecework Production**

The second type is a woman engaged in piecework which is organised by a factory or a workshop in the neighbourhood. The materials are provided and collected either by an intermediary or by the woman herself. Payment is received when completed products are collected.

**Samia**, a 35-year-old seamstress, is married and has two school-age children. She completed her primary education. She worked for eight years in a textile factory. After marriage, her husband objected to her working in a factory, so

she left her job. A year later, she started to work from her home for a small garment factory.

Her husband is 39 years of age. He had some years of schooling. He is a worker in a garment factory. His work is irregular and is paid on a daily basis (LE20).

Samia owns a sewing machine. To buy the sewing machine she sold a small gold bracelet. Describing how she got into piecework production, Samia said:

*It was very difficult to live with his [her husband] irregular income so I had to do something, especially since he does not allow me to work outside the home. The only thing I know is sewing. One of my friends told me about this work. When I told my husband he did not object and went to the factory to make the deal on my behalf.*

When asked if she prefers working at home, Samia answered:

*At the beginning I did not like it, because I used to work in a factory and get more money. Now it is more work and less money. I work for more than eight hours a day including Fridays [the weekend], and if I'm behind schedule, I even work more. I know that if I do not finish on time I will lose my work, which we cannot afford, especially now that we have children.*

Like Amina, Samia has to interrupt her work throughout the day to accommodate her domestic work, which she considers a priority. Describing her daily routine, she says:

*I have to cook, clean and prepare food for the children and their father, so I have to get up very early to do these things. Then I start with my sewing till lunchtime, and work most of the afternoon. My husband does not accept any compromises when it comes to my duties.*

Her husband does not help in the actual work. However, he is the one who gets the material, takes back the finished items to the factory, and collects the money. He is also responsible for taking the sewing machine to be repaired, or for maintenance.

Samia is paid 20 piasters for each item. On average she makes 30 items per day. Her monthly income, providing she finishes all the items, is around LE180. The factory provides her with material to cover a whole week. Usually she manages to meet the deadlines. However, when her husband does not have work she cannot do as much. Samia reported that her husband hates to see her working, so she has to do it while he is sleeping or out with his friends.

Beside her piece-rate work, Samia sews for relatives and some of her friends. However, she cannot do this on a regular basis because she does not have enough time. Samia explained:

*I need this little extra money for the children because my husband takes the money I get from the factory. He does not know anything about this extra work I do, otherwise he would not let me do it.*

#### **4.4. The Family Enterprise**

In this type of arrangement, a couple start a small project and work together producing items in response to orders. Usually they produce for small shops, retailers or street sellers but not for individual consumers.

**Madiha**, a 36-year-old seamstress, completed her secondary schooling and worked as a clerk in a court in Cairo for 10 years. She got married at the age of 28 then divorced two years later. She remarried a year later. Her husband objected to her working outside the home, especially after the birth of their first child. She left her job and stopped working for a year. With her savings from her previous work she managed to start a small business with her husband.

Her husband is illiterate. Before starting the business, he worked as a street seller for 16 years. When they started the business, he managed to establish a few contacts with wholesalers and retailers to sell the items they produced.

They live in a rented apartment consisting of three rooms. One of these rooms, located beyond the entrance hall, is assigned to their work. In the middle of the room stands a long table which Madiha uses for cutting the material. On one side of the room is a big sewing machine; on the other, material rolls stand against the wall.

They produce children's clothes mainly for girls. Madiha said:

*When we first started, we used to produce different items depending on the orders we got. Then once we got an order for little girl's dresses and after that we continued this line as the merchants we deal with liked our product.*

When asked how they obtained the capital to start the business, the answers of the partners differ. As mentioned earlier, Madiha claimed that it was her savings from a previous job. Her husband reported that the start-up capital was from his own savings.

Discrepancies between wives' and husbands' answers regarding the source of their start-up capital were found in almost all cases. Our male respondents firmly denied that they took any money from their wives and insisted that it was their own money. Even in cases where women run their own business, most husbands claimed that they had given their wives the money, or at least part of it, to start the business.

- At the time of the interview, they had been working for five years. The business expanded and they started to get orders in relatively large quantities. They also had certain merchants who ordered and collected the products.

Madiha's job is mainly to cut the material according to the ordered model. Then she gives the material to neighbourhood women to sew the dresses. These women do the work on a piece-rate basis. The number of women working varies depending on the size of the order; usually there are between 5 and 10 women. The payment ranges between 10 and 15 piasters per piece. Madiha is responsible for distributing the material and picking up the finished



items. She is also the one who decides if the women's work is satisfactory, as her husband knows nothing about sewing. If their work is not good enough then these women are not given more work.

Both the type and pace of production is oriented by the orders. Madiha explained:

*I spend between 4 and 5 hours daily in cutting the material and preparing the items for delivery. When the order is large it takes me between 10 and 12 hours to finish the work.*

Most of the work is carried out at home, except when the order is big. Then Madiha's husband rents a small workshop owned by a friend for this purpose. The problem with this arrangement is that they can only rent the place on Fridays, which is the day off for this shop. Madiha works the whole day and sometimes during the night to finish the work.

*During these periods my husband does not allow me to do anything else except the work. He usually takes the children to my mother's or his. The only thing he does is wait for me to finish the work.*

The husband's work, on the other hand, is to make the deals with merchants, get the orders, obtain materials, market the product, and collect the payments. He is also the one who pays the piece-rate women workers for their work. He buys the materials from wholesalers either on credit or with cash depending on the cash flow. He also negotiates prices with the merchants.

The average price for a dress is between LE2 and 3 depending on the result of negotiations with the merchants. The cost also depends on the price of the materials. However, producers cannot raise prices in direct proportion to the rise in the price of materials because they strive to keep their prices competitive.

In these enterprises, control, management of labour, and income are crucially bound up with a web of rights and obligations, and the gender division of

labour within the household. For both partners, women's work is defined as part of family obligations.

It is important to consider how both partners evaluate the contributions of each to production. In general, whenever the task is done by the wife, it is considered easy and less important; when it is done by the husband, it is considered difficult and crucial for the work.

For Madiha, what her husband does is far more important for their business than her work. This is justified by the argument:

*Do you think I can travel around to sell the product, or deal and negotiate with wholesalers to get the material? If it were not for him, this project would have failed.*

Madiha's husband, confirmed what his wife said, adding:

*Her work is not essential for our work. If she decided not to work I can replace her easily.*

Family enterprises tend to pay very low returns to their labour or they pay nothing. Madiha does not receive money for the work she does. Her husband gives her only the housekeeping allowance. She explained:

*I do not need the money. If I want anything my husband will buy it for me. We have to keep our money to have cash to pay for the materials. Working for your own business is not like being employed somewhere by somebody. Here it is my duty towards my family.*

Madiha does not know anything about the financial situation of the business or their profit. Her husband travels to market the products or to deliver an order. She commented:

*Of course he spends lots of money when travelling and I don't know how much and I don't dare ask him. Yet, when I ask him for money he says it will affect our capital.*

Although Madiha expressed her dissatisfaction about her husband withholding financial information, she justified his behaviour by asserting his responsibility to administer the business. Madiha, like most women in these enterprises, may silently question the inequality and feel conflict between how they feel and how they think they should feel.

As in the case of petty-traders, there is a major difference between individual producers and family enterprises in the scale of the operation. The data indicate that family enterprises are usually larger and more successful.

Women producers running their own business are confined to their homes and prevented from building a business network and developing their skills. In addition, they have no access to economic resources and are the most immobile and inflexible. Although the individual producers have regular customers, however, they are limited by the purchasing power of neighbours who are poor. Women engaged in family enterprises work under their husbands' authority with no access to the rewards of their labour, and no opportunity to improve their economic status.

## **5. Work-Related Decision-Making**

Drawing on our data, this section compares patterns of decision-making on work-related issues between women petty-traders and home-based producers. To this end, women respondents were given a list of various work-related decisions each with three possible answers based on whether the decision was made by the wife, the husband, or jointly. It was possible to create a score which ran from five if the husband decided everything alone, to 15 if the wife decided everything alone. A score of 10 implied equality between husband and wife in decision-making with regard to these issues. Included in our analysis are the findings of the in-depth interviews with the couples of the 22 households in our sub-sample with regard to the same issue.

Table 5.7 Decision-making on work-related issues

Issues	Women home-based producers (N) 45						women petty-traders (N) 55					
	Wife		Husband		both		wife		Husband		Both	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Taking up work	27	60.0	8	17.8	10	22.2	31	56.4	8	14.5	16	29.1
Place of work	29	64.4	11	24.4	5	11.1	33	60.0	12	21.8	10	18.2
Rhythm of work	38	84.4	2	4.4	5	11.1	45	81.8	4	7.3	6	10.9
Daily decisions	32	71.1	6	13.3	7	15.6	40	72.7	6	10.9	9	16.4
Organisation of work	7	15.6	33	73.3	5	11.1	30	54.5	20	36.4	5	9.1
Buying stock/ raw material	7	15.6	33	73.3	5	11.1	35	63.6	15	27.2	5	9.1
Financial issues	6	13.3	30	66.7	9	20.0	34	61.8	12	21.8	9	16.4

In general, most women reported they were making work-related decisions by themselves. In a few cases these decisions were taken jointly by the respondents and their partners, while in some others, the partner made these decisions for the respondent.

Taking up paid work seems to be a decision that a woman makes. The majority of women in the two groups reported making such a decision (60 percent of home-based producers and 56.4 percent of petty-traders). In some cases, women reported that the decision was made by the husband (17.8 percent of home-based and 14.5 percent of petty-traders).

However, when women were asked if they needed their husbands' permission to work, almost all respondents said that it was essential. Some women further explained that without their husbands' approval they could not have worked. Others reported that they tried hard to convince their husbands to give them their approval. All male respondents affirmed that the husband was the one who made the decision for his wife to work.

One woman respondent said:

*I cannot do anything that is important such as taking up paid work without asking my husband. If he does not approve of my decision, I keep on trying to convince him but I will never do*

*anything against his will. A woman should obey her husband and avoid making him angry with her.*

Women who are involved in family enterprises said that they decided on their own to work in the enterprise rather than break from it. The rationale behind entering family enterprises seems to be related to a wife's duty towards her family and her husband.

Most women interviewed reported that the only acceptable reason for a woman to work and earn an income is to support her family. Otherwise, she should not work. Moreover, other members of the household, especially husbands, do not recognise women as workers; if they are perceived as such, they are assigned the status of a 'helper'. In Egypt, several studies reported similar findings (for example, Lynch and Fahmi 1984; Fergany 1994; and Singerman 1995).

The separation between workplace and home in the case of women petty-traders affects the way women perceive their income-generating activities. While women petty-traders refer to selling as a separate job and acknowledge its importance for the earnings it provides, home-based producers could not distinguish between their productive work and domestic duties. They see their work as an extension of their role in the home. However, all women respondents explained that they would leave work if their husbands were financially able to support the household.

With regard to choosing the location of work, Table 5.6 reveals that it is mainly the wife's decision in both groups, since 64.4 percent of home-based producers and 60 percent of the petty-traders reported that it was their decision. For the petty-traders, this assertion must be seen in light of the nature of their occupation. As mentioned earlier, the vast majority of these women came to the market as young girls helping their parents, and have been in the market since. For them, working in the market was not an issue to decide upon.

On the other hand, during interviews it was found that most women home-based producers chose to work inside the home because their husbands opposed their desire to work outside. Some of the women who used to work outside their homes had to leave their jobs for that reason. Among home-based producers, most husbands reported that the decision about the place of work for their wives was theirs. Husbands' objected to their wives working outside the home either because "*women's responsibilities towards their children and their homes would be affected by their work outside the home*", or because "*women should not work with strangers*" [men from outside the family].

The findings reported in Table 5.6 show that the majority of women in both groups are dominant in decisions that directly relate to the daily routine of the work, such as time spent in work and working arrangements. No significant differences were found between women in the two groups.

However, sharp differences appeared when addressing more important work-related decisions related to the organisation of work, such as hiring a helping hand or deciding the amount of produce to buy; getting raw material or stock as well as marketing for home-based producers; and financial issues such as pricing or payment terms for supplies. A much larger proportion of petty-traders reported making such decisions on their own (54.5, 63.6 and 61.8 percent), while the percentages in the case of home-based producers were 15.6, 15.6 and 13.3 percent.

Table 5.6 reveals that husbands were dominant in decision-making with regard to the issues mentioned above among women home-based producers.

Women were further asked if their husbands interfered with their work. Three possible answers were offered: always, sometimes, or never. In the case of women home-based producers nearly 60 percent reported that their husbands always interfered; 20 percent said sometimes, and 20 percent never. As for women petty-traders 36 percent replied always, 34 percent sometimes, and 29 percent never.

The high percentage of home-based producers reporting that their husbands always interfered in their work is related to the fact that the majority of these women work in family enterprises controlled by the husband. Even in the case of own-account working women, being situated inside the home increased their dependence on their husbands in many issues related to their work.

For women petty-traders, on the other hand, working away from home granted them a degree of independence and lessened husbands' interference. As one woman said: *"he cannot tell me what to do or how to do things even if he want. He is at work all day and I am here in the market on my own."*

In home-based family enterprises, husbands tended to interfere even further with the actual details of work, such as deciding the time allocated for work, especially at times of peak work loads and in the run-up to delivery deadlines.

Husbands' control over the family enterprise is related to the way couples define who is responsible for the work. In most cases, both partners indicated that husbands were solely responsible for the enterprise. Most women respondents referred to the business as 'his' work and perceived themselves as 'helping out'. All male respondents, on the other hand, perceived themselves as solely responsible for the work and regarded their wives' contribution as auxiliary. In other cases, mainly among traders' enterprises, both partners considered themselves as the person responsible for the business. Only in one case did both partners consider it a shared responsibility.

Furthermore, husbands' control over the enterprise was a source of conflict among women petty-traders. Some of these women even accused their husbands of mismanaging the business.

In general, the scoring indicated that women petty-traders perceive themselves as having a high degree of control over their work especially for those working on their own account. While nearly 60 percent of petty-traders

scored 15 in decisions related to their work, only 30 percent of women who work at home got the same score. In addition, the lowest score of 5 was reported by approximately 40 percent of home-based producers compared with 25 percent of petty-traders.

## **6. Summary**

The preceding discussion highlighted the need to go beyond women's earning capacity to the discussion of relations of production, power relations and gender divisions within the household.

Kabeer (1991:24) argues that the degree of separability and autonomy in household production processes and labour relations making up social relations in the local context are critical issues in determining gender co-operation and conflicts within the household.

The author identifies two types of household systems. In the first model the household is organised as an hierarchical and corporate structure. Based on Kandyoti's description (1988) of household arrangements, the main characteristic of such households is that the total control of economic resources is generally vested in the male head who may allocate resources differently to household members, according to the position they occupy in terms of age and gender. Women depend on their men as mediators with the outside world. Their strategies to maximise their security involve gaining and keeping the protection of their men through the adoption of attitudes of submissiveness and self-sacrifice.

In the second model, there is a degree of separability in economic activity between genders. In these households there are areas of relative autonomy in decision-making for men and women. Thus, women have a better negotiating position with their husbands.



Whitehead (1985:44) further suggests that in analysing power distribution between the genders with regard to relations of command and control in the division of labour, it is important to consider whether women enter the production process as unpaid family labourers, wage labourers, or as independent, own-account workers. Clearly the very notion of labour for others, even within family relationships, carries with it the potential for control of work to lie with the user of the labour rather than its provider.

Although all the empirical examples used by the authors mentioned above to illustrate their arguments are based on rural areas, our findings indicate that they are applicable in an urban context.

Our data reveal that women working on their own may retain a higher degree of control over their work. They also tend to have a higher level of participation in decision-making related to their work. However, while all women petty-traders are fully in charge of their business, most of their home-based counterparts depend on their husbands in some aspects of their work.

Women who work in family enterprises are the most subordinate. They are unremunerated for their work and subject to the control of male family decision-makers. Their position in the enterprise is defined by their position in the family. Women's role in these enterprises is seen, by the women themselves, as well as their partners, as that of a 'helper'. As Greenhalgh (1991:25) explains, women's work is socially recognised as a family duty, a label that devalues their productive contribution and reinforces the social definition of their role as housewives.

Our main concern at this point is to investigate the extent to which the location and organisation of women's work affect the internal dynamics of the household. These include the negotiation of budgeting and expenditure, domestic divisions of labour and responsibilities, and the decision-making processes. These issues will be addressed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE HOUSEHOLD

[...] households are important in feminist analysis because they organise a large part of women's domestic/reproductive labour. As a result, both the composition and the organisation of households have a direct impact on women's lives, and in particular on their ability to gain access to resources, to labour and to income (Moore 1988:55).

#### 1. Introduction

Having examined and compared the different patterns of work organisation between petty-traders and home-based producers in the previous chapter, our focus here is on the internal dynamics of the household. The aim of this chapter is to explore the extent to which women's type of economic activities affects gender relations and household arrangements.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the *household* as a focus for research. Some scholars consider the household, rather than individuals, as the basic economic unit, as a more useful way to approach work of production, reproduction and consumption (Pahl 1984:10). Others, specifically sociologists and anthropologists, are more concerned with what actually happens within the household. They view investigations into gender, generation, and intra-household relationships as being of paramount importance (for example, Moore 1988; Wolf 1992; and Jelin 1990).

Activities and tasks carried out within the household can be classified as production and consumption activities. The latter can be defined as the organisation and distribution of goods and services to meet specific needs. They

encompass issues such as the organisation of family budget and expenditure, as well as decision-making with regard to financial and non-financial matters (Jelin 1990:24).

The interest in investigating the relationship between money and power within the household has led to a growing number of studies on the organisation and distribution of income and the consequences for members of the household (for example, Pahl 1989; Blumstein and Schwartz 1991; and Whitehead 1981). These studies show that analysing financial arrangements enables us to investigate a number of issues related to gender power relations within the household.

According to Roldan (1988:229) studies of money allocation within the household can help to eradicate several assumptions about the nature of intra-household processes. These include the notion that members of the household have a similar standard of living and that all income entering the household is equally distributed to all members according to their needs, irrespective of who earns it.

Patterns of financial arrangements take many forms across different societies (Bruce and Dwyer 1988). They also vary widely at the household level, depending on such factors as place, time, social class and income level, life cycle stage and household type, and the way in which work is organised and income received (Pahl 1989:27).

In this chapter several aspects will be treated in depth. First, patterns of money allocation and spending among women petty-traders and home-based producers. Second, decision-making and control within the household. Third, division of domestic work and childcare.

However, before proceeding with our discussion of the empirical data from the comparative study, we will consider family and marriage in Egypt in order to place our analysis in its cultural and legal context.

## **2. Family and Marriage in Egypt**

In Egypt, the family-based household is the most common form. Individuals move out of their natal households when they form their own households through marriage. Membership of an Egyptian household is rarely extended to non-kin. A household may include extended or nuclear family members, and other kin on occasions (Rugh 1984; Hoodfar 1997; and Singerman 1995).

In Egypt, the family plays a central role in the lives of its members and in society at large. As in most parts of Muslim world, marriage is the only acceptable context for sexual activity and for parenthood. It also provides the primary framework for the fulfilment of gender roles. The family is a fundamental unit of society for its role in the socialisation of children, and in transmitting cultural values.

Marriage is probably the most important social event in the lives of Egyptian men and women. Parents are usually involved in the marriage of their children, both male and female. They are involved in both marriage negotiations and financing. In low-income Egyptian families, parents organise their savings and consumption strategies to be able to finance the marriages of their children. However, while parents can withdraw from involvement in a son's marriage without great social consequences, no parent can choose not to participate in a daughter's marriage arrangements. A family's honour and self-respect are very closely tied to the daughter (Hoodfar 1997:66).

Family and marriage should also be seen in the context of Islam, which has played a major role in defining the position of women within the family in terms of juridical rights and moral perception. It has also placed gender roles at the centre of the Egyptian culture as a major source of personal and social honour. So while a woman fulfils her functions by being a wife and a mother, the man is the undisputed authority, the breadwinner, and the active member in public life (Moghadam 1993:100).

Egyptian culture further idealises the role of the mother as the highest a woman is likely to achieve. Typically, mothers are perceived as *self-sacrificing, caring, nurturing, loving and indulgent to their children*. They are pictured centring their lives around rearing their children and gaining their identity from this role (MacLeod 1991:82).

In marriage, the wife is entitled to unconditional economic support from her husband regardless of her own financial ability. She remains in control of her income and property, whether inherited or earned. In practice, these rights are usually monopolised by the males of the family. In return for his unconditional economic support the wife is expected to obey her husband. Her main obligations are to maintain a home and care for the children.

This traditional idealised definition of the roles of men and women (men as the breadwinners and women as the homemakers) has been increasingly challenged by economic necessity, making women's employment essential to the maintenance of their families.

However, prevailing gender ideologies contribute to asymmetrical gender relations within the family. Gender division of labour is legitimised in terms of complementary and reciprocity. Whatever the expectations about married women's work are, the reality is that men and women remain trapped in traditional *ideals* that see the men as the main breadwinners and women as primarily responsible for consumption.

## **2.1. Women's Legal Position in the Family**

Legal status and laws regulating the family and relations among its members constitute the cornerstone of how the state intervenes in the family. This intervention takes various forms: apart from marriage registration, there is family law, the content of which differs across societies. There are also laws pertaining to reproductive rights, contraception, and abortion. There may be legal codes

regarding provision of care within families and assigning responsibilities to family members.

Crucial factors determine the legal status and social position of women such as the nature of the political system, the objectives of the state, or the orientation of the ruling elite. Legislation is a key element in the strategies available to the state in its efforts to produce social changes or to maintain the status quo. Through family law the state can maintain existing gender arrangements; it can alter social policies and laws in the direction of greater restrictions on women; or it can introduce new legislation to foster more equality within the family (Moghadam 1993:104).

The Egyptian constitution explicitly prohibits any discrimination on the basis of gender in either economic or political rights. However, certain laws, particularly those related to personal status and family relations, carry a clear discriminatory bias against women. They are justified by reference to traditional social values and/or Islamic religious grounds. Moreover, even in areas where women's rights are not compromised by law, socio-cultural constraints rooted in custom and tradition continue to constitute a serious impediment to the full realisation of these rights (Zaki 1995:208).

The Personal Status Law or family law regulates marriage, divorce, individual rights and responsibilities and the transmission of property through inheritance; it is thus a prime example of state policy affecting women. It is based on Islamic *Sharia*. Traditionally and up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the *Sharia* governed all aspects of life in Egypt. By the end of the nineteenth century, the legal system had been secularised. This was true for all institutions in Egypt except the family. Personal Status Law remains the only branch of law in which Islamic *Sharia* is applied.

The Personal Status Law in effect today was first enacted in 1929. Since that date some minor amendments have been introduced to it, but its basic stipulations remain the same. A few changes were introduced to the law in 1979 giving women more rights in divorce and children custody. These amendments

were soon replaced on the basis that they were against Islamic *Sharia*. The old law was reinstituted as the only valid family law in the country (CAPMAS 1992:24).

Family law in Egypt is applicable only to Muslim women. The current Personal Status Law reveals a marked discriminatory bias against women. In the marriage contract, unless stated otherwise, women are commanded to obey their husbands in every respect save that which conflicts with God's law as embodied in the *Sharia*.

A woman has no right to divorce except with her husband's consent or by court order after providing sufficient evidence to support her case. Choosing to get a divorce through courts is a long process, usually lasting on average about five years. If the woman fails to get a court order for divorce, she has no choice but to live with her husband as she is legally bound to him by his right to demand her obedience. The husband, on the other hand, can unilaterally, and without need to provide any justification, divorce his wife by a simple proclamation to that effect.

According to the *Sharia*, men can also take up to four wives, which constitutes a continuous challenge to the wife's position within her household. A recent amendment allows the wife to request divorce if her husband takes another wife. Other aspects of this law are equally discriminatory against Egyptian women. These include custody rights of children after divorce, and alimony for divorced women with no children.

When it comes to physical mobility, a wife cannot work against her husband's wishes; he also can demand that she does not leave the house except with his permission (Zaki 1995:212).

Discrimination against women also extends to the supposedly secular civil law in the area of a woman's right to travel. The male guardian, father or brother must give his consent if an unmarried woman wishes to obtain a passport. Married women must have their husbands' consent before they can be issued a

passport. The husband also retains the right to forbid his wife to travel, even if she has a valid passport.

In short, the legal system, societal context, and marriage institution discussed above contribute to women's insecurity and misery, especially among the lower classes, and further affect intra-household relations and the bargaining power of women within them.

### **3. Patterns of Money Management**

In what follows, we will consider the main areas of comparison regarding the financial arrangements within the household and seek to identify similarities and differences amongst the two groups of working women considered in this study.

In Egypt, little is known in the available literature about financial arrangements within the household. Some empirical work (for example, Nadim 1977; Singerman 1995; and Wikan 1980) makes passing reference to the way in which couples organise their finances. Only one study by Hoodfar (1988 and 1997) on household economy and survival strategies in a poor neighbourhood in Cairo deals directly with financial arrangements and their consequences for household members.

In her study, Hoodfar (1997:143) identifies seven patterns of money management ranging from situations in which women enjoy complete access to and control over cash and family expenditure to the exact opposite. Her classification is based on the degree of women's access to their husbands' income.

Hoodfar's findings show that factors such as the age of the couple and the domestic cycle have little effect on the household's financial arrangements. Similarly, aggregate family income is not associated with any particular pattern of budgeting. In addition, she argues that the type of women's occupation has no effect on the household financial strategies, except in those cases where the husband does not contribute to its support. Therefore, the husband's economic



activity is the most important determinant of how the household organises its financial matters (1997:144-45). In contrast to Hoodfar's findings, our study, as discussed below, shows that the type of work women perform and the income pattern do affect the way couples organise their money.

Hoodfar (1997:145), on the other hand, concludes that women's influence on household expenditure is correlated with their access to money. Our results show that even when women have full access to the household income and are responsible for managing expenditure their control is limited.

It has been argued that in analysing financial arrangements it is important to distinguish between two aspects, *management* and *control*. *Control* is mainly exercised at the point where money enters the household. It is concerned with decision-making aspects of family finances. *Management*, on the other hand, is concerned with carrying out these decisions (Pahl 1989:57). This distinction is crucial when analysing women's relationship to household resources such as income and property. Women's involvement in money and property management does not mean that they have control over these issues (Standing 1991:89).

A useful classification is found in Pahl's (1989:67) study of financial arrangements in Britain. She bases her classification of money management patterns on two main criteria. The first is defined by the extent to which each partner has access to the main source of money coming into the household. The second relates to the extent to which he or she has responsibility for managing household expenditure. She identifies four systems of money management within the household.

The first is the whole wage system, where there is a single male breadwinner; the husband gives his wife the entire wage for housekeeping expenses. The second is the pooling system in which couples, or other working members of the household, pool their incomes and pay expenses from the total amount. The third is the allowance system, where the husband gives his wife a fixed allowance on a regular basis. The fourth is the independent management

system, in which both couples keep their incomes separate and pay for different items independently.

The classification used in this study is based on Pahl's typology. With the elimination of the first type since our sub-sample of 22 households includes only working women, three patterns have been depicted: the *pooling system* (shared management), the *allowance system*, the *separate funds* (independent management).

Table 6.1 Patterns of money management

Pattern	Home-based producers	Petty -traders
Pooling system	4	3
Allowance system	7	5
Separate fund	-	3
Total	11	11

### 3.1. The Pooling System (Common Fund)

Table 6.1 presents the different patterns of money management by household of both women petty-traders and home-based producers. The pool pattern is found in seven households, four of which are of home-based producers.

In this pattern of management, the couples have a common fund into which both incomes are paid and from which both can draw. In most the cases the fund is used to cover all household expenditures, such as food, rent, electricity bills, school fees, and clothes. In theory, both partners have access to the income entering the household and expenditure responsibilities are more or less shared. However, in reality, the situation differs.

This pattern is found mainly among women working independently of their husbands. In five households, three of which are of petty-traders', the responsibility for managing the fund is shared between husband and wife. In the remaining two, which is of home-based producers', the responsibility is the wife's.

In the households in which respondents claim shared management, both partners have equal access to the household income. However, there is a division of responsibility between husband and wife. While managing daily expenses and children's needs is the woman's responsibility, the husband is responsible for other financial matters, such as rent and major bills.

Fayza and her husband are a typical example of those who manage their money in this way. She is a 27-year-old petty-trader, and earns around LE100 per month. Her husband works as a night watchman (*ghafeer*) and his monthly income is LE150. The couple keep their earnings in a drawer and make payments as they arise. Fayza is mainly responsible for all the family needs. She explained:

*My husband usually takes out money to pay for the rent and the other bills. I manage the rest of the money. I pay for the food, school fees and the children's needs.*

Fayza's husband commented:

*She [his wife] is good with money. She knows better when it comes to the family necessities. She does the shopping and looks after the children, so she knows who needs what.*

In these households, shared management is associated with increased accountability for wives but not for husbands. The wife has no actual control over household's expenditure. Her spending decisions are limited to certain areas such as what to feed her family, or what to buy for her children.

Fayza seems to be content with this arrangement:

*Because the money is at home I do not have to ask my husband whenever I have a payment to make. [However, she feels that she has to justify spending money.] I cannot draw money from the fund without telling my husband, otherwise he will be very angry.*

Although Fayza's husband expects her to tell him whenever she spends money, he does not feel that he has to do the same.

Most male and female respondents reported that the fund is accessible to both partners. It is true that women have full physical access to the money. However, they act as caretakers or money keepers. Husbands, on the other hand, have full access and control over the money and can obtain whatever they need.

Although most women, like Fayza, felt happy with this arrangement, some of the women complained. One woman commented:

*Managing money is a difficult task. You have little money and so many family necessities to cover. Besides, if anything goes wrong, my husband would be very angry and would hold me responsible.*

Another women said:

*I don't see why he can go and spend money as he likes while I have to ask him whenever I do, even if it is something the family needs.*

Differences between husbands and wives also arise when considering the amount of income both partners contribute to the common fund. While all the female respondents contributed all their earnings to the pool, deducting personal spending money was a common practice among our male respondents. It is allocated for leisure activities, such as sitting in coffee-houses (*Qahwa*) and buying cigarettes. Even in cases where the family's earnings were meagre, husbands would not give up this privilege.

Male and female respondents were asked if they knew how much their partner earned. The majority of husbands reported that they knew exactly how much their wives earn, while their wives knew nothing about theirs. It seems that concealing information about their real income is considered by many husbands as an assertion of absolute power and authority. "*How much I earn is none of her business*" as one husband said. Although most women respondents confirmed their husbands' views, separate interviews with

husbands and wives revealed discrepancies in their answers. In most cases, neither partner knew how much the other actually earned.

Moreover, our findings indicate that women do conceal part of their earnings from their husbands. This is usually the case for women, mainly home-based producers who engage in additional work. On the other hand, some women petty-traders, because of the irregularity of their income, manage to withhold a portion of their earnings. They justify this act by asserting that they need the extra money to cater for the additional needs of their children.

In the last two households operating a common fund, both home-based, the wife is the person solely responsible for managing the fund.

In the first household, Habiba, a 58-year-old seamstress, is a widow living with her son and daughter. Both are factory workers. Their total income is around LE500, which is pooled in a common fund. She contributes all her earnings to the fund, while her children keep some money for personal expenditure.

The mother manages and controls the household income. Out of this common fund, she pays all the major bills and buys the household necessities. Only in the case of major expenditures such as buying a washing machine does she discuss the matter with her children before making a decision.

In the second household Amina, another seamstress mentioned in the previous chapter, whose husband is mentally disabled and works as a laundryman, has four children who are students, two of them at university. She is the major earner in the household. She earns around LE300 per month while her husband's income is LE70. The couple pool their earnings. Amina pays for everything out of the fund including her children's school and university fees and her work expenses.

In all the cases outlined above, it is evident that financial power lies in the hands of one partner -in most cases, the husband. Even those who claimed

shared management in practice revealed a fundamental distinction between wives' and husbands' responsibilities in financial matters.

### **3.2. The Housekeeping Allowance Pattern**

This pattern, according to Table 6.1, is the most common, prevailing in 12 households. Seven of these are of women home-based producers. This pattern of management seems to prevail in households in which a family business operates (10 households).

In its most common form, the husband gives a fixed proportion of his income as a daily, weekly, or monthly allowance to his wife, from which she pays for specific items of household expenditure. The rest of the money remains in the husband's control and he pays for other items as they arise.

In this system, the husband has access to the main source of income, while his wife has access to an allowance. It seems that the husband's control over the business capital and his wife's labour gives him the opportunity to control the household income as well.

No differences are depicted in the attitudes and divisions of responsibilities between couples in the petty-traders and the home-based producers groups. Women are responsible only for expenditure on food and daily necessities of the household, while husbands assume responsibility for all other expenditures.

Only two households where women run their own business, both home-based, adopted this pattern. The women reported handing over their earnings to their husbands and receiving a weekly allowance for food. The control of husbands in these two cases, as in family enterprises, is absolute.

Soaad, 28 years old, is a private typing tutor, and also provides typing services. Her main customers are students. Thus, her work is interrupted

during summer holidays. She earns LE200 per month. Her husband is a government employee and earns LE150.

The decision to organise the household's finances in this way was her husband's. The husband was also responsible for making all the expenditure decisions. In explaining why she gives her husband her income, Suad's said:

*My husband is better than me in handling money. Besides, he knows better what's best for the family.*

A more blunt view was given by the husband:

*Women cannot be trusted with money, and men should run the household money.*

### **3.3. The Separate Fund (Independent Management)**

The main characteristic of this system is that each partner has an income which they control, they manage their money independently, and each is responsible for specific items of expenditure.

This pattern was encountered in three households of petty-traders working on their own. In contrast with the other cases, it was the women who decided that the household finances would be managed this way.

The first case is of a divorced petty-trader living with her brother and his wife. Shadia, 35 years old, manages her income independently and pays for specific items in the household such as food, and part of the rent.

In explaining how they arrived at this arrangement, Shadia said:

*After my divorce I moved in with my brother and his wife because it is not acceptable for a divorced young woman to live on her own. At the beginning he wanted me to give him my income as his wife does so that he can manage the spending. I refused, because I have a little child and I do not want my brother to argue with me when I want to buy anything. So we*

*arrived at an arrangement in which I can keep my money and pay for certain items.*

In the two other cases, one of the husbands is a plumber and the other is a night watchman. The spouses keep their own earnings and each is responsible for covering different needs. Husbands make allowances for rent and associated bills, and sometimes clothing. Wives, on the other hand, pay for daily expenses and children's needs.

Um Salah, a petty-trader, mentioned in the previous chapter, explains how she and her husband switched to this system.

*We used to put our money together when we first married. My husband had two daughters from a previous marriage and used to give them money from the fund. You know we do not earn much and my children need the money I earn. So I pulled out and told him that if he wants to give his daughters something he should take it from his own money.*

Um Salah's husband seemed to have been forced to adopt this system. In replying to the same question he said:

*The way we used to organise our finances was much better because having all the money at home we could make our budget as a family. Now I am lost. I do not know who pays for what. Dividing the money makes it less worthy. [When asked about the reason for changing the old pattern, he replied:] It was her decision and it was a major source of quarrels, so I decided to accept to have some peace.*

The three women preferred this arrangement. They reported that it gives them a sense of control and freedom to decide how to spend the money. In addition, it spares them begging their husbands for money whenever they wanted to buy something.



In all the systems of money management outlined above, there is a clear division of responsibilities between men and women. Whereas daily necessities are always a female responsibility, major bills and larger items tend to be the male's responsibility; thus, as Pahl concluded, budgeting is gendered (1989).

At this point, it is important to investigate the extent to which the earnings of wives and husbands are earmarked for different kind of expenditure. Many empirical studies (for example Standing 1991; Hunt 1980; and Roldan 1988) show that women's earnings are treated differently from men's. While all necessary expenditure such as rent and major bills, is taken out of the husband's income, the wife's income is used for extra expenditure, for example consumer durables and clothes for family members. In this way a wife's earnings are regarded as less important, as something the family could do without it.

Our data show that the differentiation of women's earnings from those of men is only apparent among petty-traders who adopted the separate fund pattern. On the one hand, women spend their income primarily on items for daily household consumption and children's support. Husbands, on the other hand, spend their earnings on major bills and rent.

In the households operating a common fund, whether petty-traders or home-based producers, no differentiation was found between wives' and husbands' incomes. Earnings were pooled to cover the basic needs of the household. Women's contribution to the pool ranged between 40 and 50 percent, and was thus essential to the survival of the family.

#### **4. Control and Decision-Making within the Household**

Having discussed patterns of money management within the household, we now consider the question of control and decision-making. This section

compares the patterns of decision-making on household financial matters between women petty-traders and home-based producers.

To this end, women were given a list of the various decisions related to household finances, each with three possible answers depending on whether the decision was made by the wife, the husband, or jointly. It was possible to create a score that ran from 5 if the husband decided everything alone, to 15 if a wife decided everything alone. A score of 10 implied equality between the husband and wife with regard to these issues.

As mentioned earlier (chapter 4) *dominance* in decision-making is used to determine where control lies between males and females in the household. In this section, additional criteria such as freedom to spend on oneself, the need to justify expenditure to one another, the final say on major purchases, and the extent to which women retain control over their own earnings are seen as a measure of power in the household. Our analysis draws on both quantitative data and in-depth interviews with husbands and wives in 22 households.

#### 4.1. Decisions about Financial Matters

The following table covers three areas related to financial matters within the household: the pattern of money management adopted; the day-to-day expenditure of the household, for instance on food; and major expenditure such as furniture and household equipment.

Table 6.2 Decision-making about financial matters within the household

Issues	Women home-based producers (N) 45						Women petty-traders (N) 55					
	Wife		Husband		Both		Wife		Husband		Both	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Financial arrangement	17	37.8	17	37.8	11	24.4	22	40.0	11	20.0	22	40.0
Daily expenses	31	68.9	6	13.3	8	17.8	28	50.9	8	14.5	19	34.5
Major expenditure	10	22.2	18	40.0	17	37.8	15	27.3	12	21.8	28	50.9

In general, more women petty-traders than home-based producers tend to report joint-approach to decision-making regarding financial matters in the

household. Table 6.2 indicates that the degree of participation in the decision-making with regard to the three issues is more or less the same between women petty traders and home-based producers.

According to table 6.2, a high percentage of women (40 percent of petty traders and 37.8 percent of home-based producers) reported that decisions related to the pattern of financial arrangement adopted were theirs. However, further questioning revealed that husbands made such decisions. The exception was the case of women petty-traders who kept a separate purse.

Most women accepted their husbands' decision and adopted it. Responses such as *"it is the best way"*, or *"he knows better"* reflected their contentment with the pattern. However, other women, especially those operating the allowance system, expressed their dissatisfaction and discontent by saying *"I am not happy with it but do I have a choice?"*, or *"he has all the money, we have nothing"*.

Financial matters are the main source of conflict between partners. Women complained of husband control of the money: *"we only buy what he thinks is necessary"*, or *"although he always tells me to ask for money, when I do he does not give me enough"*. Some women even accused their husbands of being selfish and inconsiderate. Husbands, on the other hand, accused their wives of misusing the fund, withhold money secretly, and demanding too much.

In urban Cairo, shopping for daily household necessities is always a woman's responsibility. Women also handle all the decisions related to daily household expenses. This situation holds true in our sample. Table 6.2 indicates that women in both groups felt they were dominant in such decisions. The percentage of home-based producers who reported making such decisions was higher than that of their petty-trader counterparts (68.9 percent and 50.9 percent respectively).

Our findings show that only in the households where husbands managed all the household finances did women not make these decisions. However, they would still do the daily shopping.

Decisions over large items of expenditure varied between women in the two groups. While in home-based producers households, men were dominant (40 percent), in the case of women petty-traders, such decisions were mainly made jointly by the couple (50.9 percent). The percentage of women who reported that they made such decisions on their own was slightly higher among petty traders (27.3 percent) than home-based producers (22.2 percent).

During the interviews it became clear that in almost all cases the final say on such expenditures was always reserved for the husband. Moreover, husbands' consent was a must before making payments on major items.

When asked what would happen if they wanted to buy something that the husband did not approve of, answers varied. Most home-based women explained that they would accept to avoid disputes or sometimes physical violence from their husbands. Women traders, on the other hand, reported that they would engage in quarrels with their husbands over these issues, sometimes succeeding and at other times giving in to the husbands' decision.

In the case of women petty-traders who adopted a separate fund, husbands' approval or refusal did not count as they could pay from their own money, as this story shows:

*Once I wanted to buy a small washing machine. When I asked him to give me some money, he said, I do not have money and I do not think we need one. We had a row over this issue. In the end I bought it without his help and paid in instalments.*

The results of our scoring regarding financial matters show that 51 percent of women traders and 66 percent of home-based producers got a score of 10, which implies joint decision-making between husbands and wives.

This high percentage of reported equality in decision-making between couples contradicts our findings discussed above. This can be explained by the women's effort to present a certain self-image.

The results also indicate that 42 percent of women petty-traders and 25 percent of their counterparts scored 15, which implies that women play a major role in decision-making. Women petty-traders perceived themselves as having a greater say with regard to financial matters within the household.

#### **4.2. Control of Income**

It has been argued that the degree of women's control over the disposal of income may increase their power in the household economic and domestic decisions (Blumberg 1991:25).

However, women's ability to exercise such control over the disposal of earnings is mediated by cultural beliefs and normative expectations about the relationship of employed women to their income (Fapohunda 1988; and Wolf 1991). In addition, the pattern of money management adopted by the household seems to affect the degree of women's control over their income.

In what follows, we compare the degree of control the women felt they retain over their own earnings. Table 6.3 provides some indicators which are devised to measure such control. This is measured by examining the degree of freedom women have over the disposal of their income. Women were asked whether they needed their husband's permission to buy anything for themselves, keep a portion of their earnings as pocket money, join a saving

club<sup>1</sup>, or lend money to relatives or friends. Three possible answers were given: always, sometimes and never.

Table 6.3 Women's control over their income by place of work

<b>Needs husband's permission to</b>	Women home-based producers (N) 45						Women petty-traders (N) 55					
	Always		Sometimes		Never		Always		Sometimes		never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Buy for herself	23	51.1	11	24.4	11	24.4	23	41.8	5	9.1	27	49.1
Take pocket money	18	40.0	11	24.4	16	35.6	12	21.8	18	32.7	25	45.5
Join saving clubs	26	57.8	7	15.6	12	26.7	32	58.2	4	7.3	19	34.5
Lend money	27	60.0	3	6.7	15	33.3	24	43.6	6	10.9	25	45.5

It is apparent from Table 6.3 that women in both groups still seek their husbands' permission even when making payments from their own earnings. However, women petty traders seem to retain a higher degree of control over their earnings than their counterparts.

Table 6.3 suggests that some women in both groups allocate personal money for their own use. However, during the interviews none of the women could distinguish between personal and family spending. Without exception, when asked to provide examples of their personal spending, they mentioned children's clothing and education as well as household durables. Some of the women considered their own clothes to be personal spending. This should explain the high percentage of women who reported that they never sought husbands' permission to allocate pocket money.

Joining saving clubs is an important indicator in measuring women's control of income because it involves regular monthly payments which may last for a few months. Thus, a woman who joins a saving club without her husband's approval implies that she can commit herself to make the required payment on time.

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<sup>1</sup> A saving club (*gamiya*) consists of a group of people joining together and contributing a fixed sum of money to a treasurer on a monthly basis. Each month the money is given to one of the members. People join these clubs in order to raise a little extra cash that they need for a large payment. Among low-income groups, this is a widespread practice in Cairo.

Many respondents explained that it was because of such commitments that they did not join these clubs without husbands' consent. As one respondent said:

*If he approves then he will help me if I am not able to make my payment for whatever reason.*

With regard to joining saving clubs (*gamiyat*), the majority of female respondents, 57 percent of home-based producers and 58 percent of petty-traders, reported that they needed their husbands' approval. However, 34.5 percent of women petty-traders did not seek permission to join these clubs, compared to only 26 percent of home-based producers.

The last indicator regarding women's control over their earnings is lending money. Table 6.3 shows that among those who reported that they never sought permission to lend money, the percentage of petty-traders is much higher (45 percent) than that of home-based producers (26 percent). This is to be expected because lending money is a common practice between traders in the market.

In general, women petty-traders seem to have a higher degree of control over their earnings. The outcome of our scoring regarding this issue shows that 27 percent of women petty-traders scored 15, compared to 14 percent of home-based producers. Moreover, the percentage of home-producers who got the lowest score of 5 was higher (48.6) than that of their petty-trader counterparts (24.1 percent).

The large proportion of home-based women who reported low control over income seems consistent with the fact that most of the home-based producers worked in a family enterprise where the husbands' control prevailed. Still, a high percentage (37.1 percent) got a score of 10, which implies shared decision-making. Once again, the tendency to report joint decision-making, which is inconsistent with the findings revealed in the in-depth interviews,

demonstrates women's attempt to present a picture of a modern and more egalitarian household.

The above discussion illustrates that women's work has some impact on the degree of women's control over their money though such control is limited among women in both groups. Other factors seem to influence income control patterns.

One important factor is the way women perceive their earnings and those of their husbands. Our findings from the interviews show that there are substantial differences between husbands and wives on this issue.

Most women in our sub-sample refer to their income as belonging to the *family* rather than themselves and see their husbands' income as his own. Yet they consider the husband as the main breadwinner whose income should be devoted to the needs of the family.

This contradiction in the attitudes of the female respondents was shared by their male counterparts with regard to their earned income and responsibility. Even women who kept separate funds and considered each partner's income as his/her own, in practice devoted all their earnings to family needs. This can be attributed to the way women's work is perceived. For both partners, the only acceptable reason for women to work and earn income is to support their families. Otherwise women should not work.

Patterns of money management adopted in the household also affect women's control of income. Among the pooling couples, wives have no control over the income because it disappears into a collective fund. As a result, the wife's contribution is not allowed to become visible - a visibility which could be translated into decision-making power. However, women who keep separate funds seem to retain a higher degree of control over their income, which may or may not translate into power.



Control of income appeared to be a very important issue for our male respondents because, for them, it was directly related to their authority within the family. When asked who was in control of family income, all male respondents affirmed that they were.

It seems that the control of household income is considered one way through which husbands of working women assert their superiority in the family. The wife's earning capacity is often perceived as questioning the breadwinning capabilities of the husband and, therefore, his authority over his wife. This is expected because of the prevailing gender ideology according to which men are expected to provide well for their families (Safilios-Rothschild 1990:222). In the cases where husbands cannot fulfil this role and have to allow their wives to work, they have managed to maintain their *superior position* in the family by controlling the wife's earnings and the family income.

## **5. Domestic Work and Childcare Responsibility**

This section discusses the patterns of domestic work among women in both groups. Our objective is to investigate the extent to which the gender division of labour in domestic work is affected by women's type of employment. This will be assessed by the degree of husbands' participation in domestic work and childcare. Our discussion draws both on quantitative and qualitative data.

### **5.1. Housework**

[...] changes in marital roles are asymmetrical; wives have become co-providers, regardless of their motivations and personal aspiration, while husbands who benefit from their wives' income have not equally shared housework (Ramu 1990:70).

In Egypt, most studies which deal directly or indirectly with domestic work, point to the fact that women, whether employed or not, continue to shoulder

the entire responsibility for domestic work and childcare. Husbands rarely assist their wives in these tasks (for example, Hoodfar 1997; MacLeod 1995).

In general, all our male and female respondents defined domestic work as exclusively a woman's responsibility. Along with their paid work, women have to shop, clean, cook, wash the clothes, and look after their children. Certain domestic tasks are done daily such as cleaning, cooking, and tidying up. Other tasks like washing clothes are done once or twice a week.

Women petty-traders organise their time around their work in the market. They spend their daytime in the market and take up household duties in the evenings. The following citation shows a petty-trader's daily routine:

*Because I have to go early to the market to get the produce from the wholesaler, I usually rise at dawn before the rest of the family. I prepare the breakfast, wake the children up and help them to get ready for school. As soon as I finish I rush off to the market. I get the stuff and then go to my selling place. Of course, I have to prepare the produce for sale. I usually stay in the market till sunset and sometimes later depending on how sales are going. On my way home I do the shopping for the evening meal. When I reach home I prepare and serve dinner. After dinner, I see if the children need anything, then I wash the dishes before going to bed.*

On her day off, Friday, this same woman has more work to do because it is *washing day*. Like most women, she has neither a washing machine nor a water heater, so it is a tiring and time-consuming process. She also has to bathe the children and clean the home. Women who have grown daughters rely on their assistance in childcare and housework.

Similar patterns of daily housework are also found among home-based producers. The only exception is that they are situated in the home. However, being at home does not mean that work is less tedious or does not take long hours. On the contrary, working at home makes them more vulnerable to the continuous demand on their time by household members. Thus, they are

constantly torn between their duties towards their families and their customers:

*If I concentrate on my work to finish what I am sewing on time, then my husband and the children complain. And if I do the opposite my customers complain. I need a longer day to be able to do what I have to do.*

At this point we will consider husbands' participation in housework. Our data<sup>2</sup> indicate that husbands' involvement in housework, in both groups, was very low. Women were asked if their husbands help in housework, and chose from among three possible answers provided: never, sometimes, and always. The majority of women (78.6 percent) reported that their husbands never participated in domestic tasks. Of these, 60 percent were petty-traders and 40 percent were home-based producers. 14.6 percent of the women reported that their husbands sometimes helped them. Only 6.8 percent of the women said that their husbands always participated in domestic work.

During the interviews, women who claimed to receive help from their husbands were asked to specify the tasks that the husband did. Almost all women reported that the help they sometimes got from their husbands was restricted to shopping, which is in fact a variation on a traditional male responsibility, since it involves contact outside the home. Help was rarely provided in cleaning, cooking, or washing. Even when a woman reported that her husband did help in these tasks, the husband denied such participation.

Most petty-traders' husbands admitted that their wives were overburdened, whereas their home-based counterparts did not. However, this recognition did not translate into practical help. All male respondents expressed resentment about housework. For them housework is *women's* responsibility and it is

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<sup>2</sup> Questions about husbands' participation in domestic work apply only to ever-married women.

*inappropriate* for men to carry out such tasks. Male participation in housework is described as, *un-masculine* and *unnatural*.

Women respondents, furthermore, do not regard husband's participation in housework as acceptable. Responses such as "*men cannot do anything around the house*", or "*a man who does women's work is not a real man*" were given. They believe that the gender division of labour was *natural*, and that men are *naturally* incapable of performing these tasks.

Women who have internalised this belief are reluctant to force or even allow their husbands to share housework. Permitting a husband to cook or clean would be as much a negative reflection on the wife as it would be on him (Ramu 1990:98).

## **5.2. Childcare**

[...] the belief in feminine domesticity is ultimately reduced to beliefs about motherhood. The mother-child relationship is a 'natural unit'. Women have maternal instinct and are hence closer to their children than men ever could be; children need their mothers more than their fathers (Oakely 1985:157).

This section compares the extent to which the husbands, of women in the two groups under study participated in various activities related to childcare. Our interest is in the common practice related to childcare whether in the past or at present thus all married respondents are included, even those who do not have pre-school children.

Women were asked whether husbands participated in caring for the children. Three possible answers were given: never, sometimes and always. Nearly 53 percent of the women reported that their husbands never assisted them in childcare (68.1 percent were petty-traders and 31.9 percent home-based). Of the 18 percent who claimed that their husband had always provided such help, 62.5 were home-based while 37.5 were petty-traders.

However, husbands' participation was limited to certain aspects of childcare. Husbands never did certain tasks such as those related to personal care including bathing, dressing, feeding or changing diapers. One male respondent explained, "*cleaning, and doing the other dirty stuff is not a man's job. It is women's work, and they can do it better than men*".

In most cases, women themselves expressed objections to husband's participation in these aspects of childcare. Even in the cases where a wife could not attend to the children due to work or illness, these tasks were carried out by other women (kin or relatives). This pattern of coping consolidated the perceived womanly nature of childcare (Ramu 1990:106).

Women in both groups considered attending to the personal needs of children as their principle domestic function. One home-based producer who used to work as a clerk explained how she had to leave her job because of her daughter's illness. She said:

*A few weeks after my return to my job, after my maternity leave, my daughter fell ill. It was a serious illness which required my presence. Nobody can look after the children better than their mother. My husband insisted that I should leave my job and I agreed. I could not leave my sick child at home and go to work. If I did, I would feel terrible because as a mother I have to attend to my child myself.*

A majority of women with young children in both groups resorted to a variety of arrangements to get needed help in childcare. In most cases, their mothers, in-laws or neighbours provided this service. In other cases, they delegated responsibility of caring for the young to their older daughters.

Most women petty-traders took their children to the marketplace. Trading was probably one of the occupations outside the home that allowed women to watch over their children as they worked. It is not surprising to see a petty-trader nursing in the marketplace.

Although husbands' involvement in childcare was low, their role in decision-making related to aspects of child-rearing was much higher. Two issues were considered in our analysis, namely disciplining children and planning for their future.

With regard to disciplining children, a high proportion of women in both groups (48 percent of petty-traders and 50 percent of home-based producers) reported that it was the husband's responsibility. Among those who claimed that it was their responsibility, the percentage of women petty-traders was higher than that of home-based producers (42 percent and 25 percent respectively). Finally, 25 percent of home-based producers as compared to only 10 percent of petty-traders indicated that disciplining children was a shared responsibility between partners.

Husbands' involvement in disciplining children is expected because this is one of the areas where men exercise their authority. All men respondents in our sub-sample considered disciplining children the responsibility of the father. This was justified by responses such as:

*I have more authority over the children than their mother. They listen to me and obey my orders because they know what I say must be done. Their mother cannot do that because she is close to the children. You know, mothers are lenient.*

Other men felt the actual socialisation of the children, especially boys, should never be left to the mother:

*Mothers spoil the children and that is bad for boys. A boy raised by a woman will never be a tough man. To raise a man one should be tough with his sons.*

Although many women in both groups perceived themselves as responsible for the actual socialisation of the children, they agreed that fathers had more authority over the children. This can be attributed to the prevailing normative

*ideals* of where the authority lies in the family, which, in turn, inform women's perception.

Decisions regarding the future of the children seemed to be taken jointly by partners in the two groups. Around 44 percent of home-based producers and 39 percent of petty-traders reported making such decision with their husbands. This is to be expected because deciding on whether a child should stay in school or take up paid work depends on a household's economic situation. It has been argued that poverty and the rising costs of education represent the main barrier to children's enrolment in education (Fergany *et al.* 1996:30).

Although most women and men respondents acknowledged the importance of children's education, they could not afford to enrol all their children in schools. The cost of education involves more than tuition fees: it includes clothing, books and stationary, allowances, and private tutoring. Private tutoring has become a widespread practice in Cairo, adopted to cope with the falling educational standards at public schools. One woman observed:

*Education costs a lot. Children need school uniforms, books, etc. Above all that, we have to pay for private tutoring. We pay LE20 every month for each of our three children. They are still in primary school and tutoring costs will increase as they grow up. It will be very difficult to keep all the children in school.*

The percentage of women petty-traders who reported making education-related decisions alone was slightly higher (31 percent) than that of home-based producers (27 percent). The findings of the interviews show that making such decisions alone might lead to women shouldering the costs of children's education on their own. One home-based producer said:

*I had to sell my gold earrings to pay for my two son's school expenses. My husband said that we cannot pay for them and that one of them should work. I cannot do that, they are doing well in school. But I do not know how I will manage next year.*

In the majority of the households in our sub-sample, at least one of the children is engaged in economic activity. Children's higher levels of educational attainment (secondary school and university) are only found in some home-based producers' households. This seems to be associated with the parents' level of education, the household income, and the number of children in the family. However, whenever a decision has to be made about which of the children should remain in education, it is always made at the expense of girls.

## **6. Summary**

In the preceding discussion we investigated the impact of the location and organisation of economic activities on gender relations within the household. The discussion covers various household arrangements through which income and services are allocated and distributed within the household.

When addressing financial arrangements within the household, three different patterns of money management were found in our sample. Women's type of work and their income pattern seem to affect the way the household organises its financial matters. The pooling pattern was mainly found among women working on their own-account whether outside or inside the home. The housekeeping allowance prevailed mainly in family enterprises where women did not receive any income. The separate fund was only found among petty-traders working independently from their husbands.

Our discussion also show that different patterns of financial arrangements have an impact on women's control over their income, and consequently on their perceived bargaining power within the household. In the household, women's perception of their decision-making power depends not only on their capacity to earn, but also more importantly, on the degree to which they are in control of their earnings.



The degree of separability between the economic activities of both partners appears to be an important indicator of women's greater participation in decision-making within the household.

Women petty-traders who ran their own business and managed their earnings independently felt that they had a stronger negotiating position, and were able to achieve a greater share in household decision-making.

Women working on their own-account who pooled their income, whether petty-traders or home-based producers, tended to lose control over their earnings. However, they still perceived themselves as having achieved some degree of participation in household decision-making.

Finally, women in the two groups working in family enterprises reported having the least bargaining power. They felt that men had absolute control over the business, the household income, and their labour.

Women's economic activity has not been a critical basis for renegotiations of domestic work and childcare. Women generally agreed on what partners were supposed to do and rejected men's involvement in any of these tasks. Women felt that they should bear some share in providing for the family, but did not expect their husbands to participate in domestic work.

The contradictory picture presented here suggests that we need to consider the broader issue, that is how these women perceive themselves in their gender roles, their views of gender relations, and aspects of their personal autonomy. These are among the issues that the next chapter addresses.

## CHAPTER 7

### PERCEPTION AND PERSONAL AUTONOMY

Everyone has many identities. Being a man or a woman is one of them. Being a member of a family is another. Membership of a class, an occupation group, a nation, or a community can be a basis of particular links. One's individuality coexists with a variety of such identities. Our understanding of our interests, well-being, obligations, objectives, and legitimate behaviour is influenced by the various and sometimes conflicting effects of these diverse identities. (Sen 1990:125)

#### 1. Introduction

The preceding discussion indicates that the type of work women do has some impact on their bargaining power within the household. Our comparison of the degree of women's control regarding their work and household arrangements shows that home-based producers demonstrated a lower degree of power in terms of domestic decision-making than their petty-trader counterparts.

At this point, it is important to investigate whether the location and organisation of women's work affects aspects of self awareness, particularly those related to gender roles, gender relations and a woman's sense of autonomy *vis-à-vis* her husband, or male figure, within the household, in other words, to examine women's perception of their role as women and as workers.

Sen (1990) argues that *perception* is one important parameter in determining intra-household divisions and inequalities. Women's weak sense of self-confidence, because they do not feel valued, weakens their bargaining position within the household, and forces them to accept inferior conditions.

Papanek (1990:164) emphasises the impact of socialisation in shaping women's perception. Women's sense of their value and self-esteem is derived, in part, from the way they are brought up. Through the process of socialisation, children learn about shares and inequalities based on gender and age. Thus, they learn about their place in the family and in society.

The link between women's perception and the forms of work available to them is illustrated in many empirical studies. Several studies (for example White 1994; and Mies 1982) show that certain types of employment, such as unpaid family labour or home-based earning activities, weaken women's bargaining power. This is widely related to the invisibility of women's contribution, which adds to the devaluation of their work both by themselves and their families. Women's work in these arrangements is not perceived as an occupation, but rather as an extension of their household activities.

According to Sen (1990:144), women's access to outside earning-activity is one crucial factor affecting their bargaining position within the household. Such employment can possibly give a woman a clearer perception of her individuality, and a higher *perceived contribution* to the household's economic position.

Many studies indicate that income per se appears to be less important to women's bargaining power than access to new social networks outside the household, which certain forms of income-earning provide. The isolated conditions of home-based work deny women access to the intangible but critical extra-household resources of solidarity with other workers in the same situation (Mies 1982; Beneria and Roldan 1987; and Safa 1995), access which may improve their bargaining power *vis-à-vis* their employers and the men of their household (Kabeer 1994: 121).

Extra-domestic relationships may offer women an opportunity to see themselves differently and enhance their self-confidence. The forms of solidarity and work-centred activity which may evolve among working women, may help them to question their subordinate situation and enable them to

confront, modify or change some aspects of family and income relations within the household (Standing 1991:14).

For example, in her study of market women in Peru, Babb (1989:176) indicates that unlike domestic servants whose job isolates them from other workers, the market traders are in constant interaction with other sellers in the market. They identify with other traders and have the opportunity to discuss common problems. The solidarity among women traders can be seen on a daily basis. Street vendors who help each other evade fee collectors, sellers who assist one another in preparing goods for sale and alert their neighbours to changing price policies, all demonstrate a cooperative base of support among these working women.

This chapter is divided three parts. The first compares women's attitudes towards gender roles and their work. The second explores the extra-domestic relations that women encounter in their daily lives. The third examines women's view of personal autonomy. This is measured by women's ability to make decisions on personal matters and act on their own, the degree of women's control over their bodies, and their attitude towards wife battering.

## **2. Attitudes Towards Gender Roles and Work**

This section examines the commonalties and differences in attitudes to gender-roles between women petty-traders and home-based producers. It covers women's perception of their domestic roles, their work and its impact on their lives and their families. Husbands' attitudes to these issues are also included. The discussion in this section is based on the analysis of the in-depth interviews with the 22 couples of the sub-sample.

Our findings show no difference between women petty-traders and home-based producers regarding their perception of the gender division of labour. Women in both groups expressed a strong endorsement of the traditional position which asserts that a woman's main role is being a housewife and a

mother, while a man's main responsibility is to provide financially for the family. Male respondents also confirmed such division.

All respondents viewed male and female roles as 'natural' and could not be changed. As one respondent put it:

*A woman is a woman and a man is a man; each has a duty to fulfil. A woman's duty is to run the household and take care of the family and a man's duty is to provide for the family.*

However, all male and female respondents acknowledged that men are no longer able fully to live up to their roles as breadwinners. In the face of pressing economic need, women have to work and earn an income. Men, on the other hand, have to accept their wives' involvement in paid work. The contradiction between their conception of ideal gender roles and their own real condition is clear.

Yet, the prevailing views of *appropriate* gender roles, even when they do not correspond to practice, have an impact on perceptions and the way in which options are prioritised and valued (Hoodfar 1997:4). Domestic work, for example, is considered the wife's main responsibility irrespective of whether she is employed or not. As discussed in the preceding chapter, women respondents themselves expressed a strong opposition to their husbands' participation in housework. Husbands, on the other hand, refused to help, and, if they did, they were embarrassed to admit it.

For most women, being a mother was seen as the most important aspect of their role as wives. The prevailing ideology links women's identity and worth to their role as mothers. This belief is internalised by the majority of women, as one respondent pointed out: *"regardless of what a woman does in her life, becoming a mother is what makes her a real woman"*.

In this context, the primacy of the domestic role among women respondents can be seen as an effort to adhere to the *normative* ideal. When asked whether it was better for a woman to stay at home to take care of her family

rather than work outside the home, almost all women respondents answered affirmatively.

Their responses indicated that, in accordance with normative expectations, they felt they ought to devote themselves to full-time domestic responsibilities. Most home-based producers believed that working outside would be at the expense of their family. Responses such as *"women working outside will neglect their children"*; and *"working outside will affect domestic work negatively because when you are tired you cannot do the work properly"* were given. To that end, while acknowledging the need for extra income, home-based producers chose working patterns which would be subservient to their family responsibilities. *"Work does not have to be outside"*, as one woman explained.

Home-based producers perceived themselves as *housewives*. For most of them, personal accomplishment and success was related to their roles in the home. Terms such as *a good cook*, *a good mother*, and the ability to maintain *a clean home* gave them their sense of worth. Yet, further questioning revealed that women acknowledged the importance of excelling in their paid work, and thus devoted much of their time to such work. One woman said:

*If I am not a good seamstress then I will lose my customers. I have to work very hard to keep a good professional reputation.*

Primacy of domestic roles also appeared when women described how their priorities were organised. One respondent said:

*The first thing I do is to finish all my duties around the house and then I sit down to my sewing. I also stop my work if there is anything that I have to do around the house. Well, I think what a woman does at home is far more important than any other work.*

In reality, women's domestic responsibilities are organised around their paid work patterns. Under certain circumstances, for example a large order or during high working seasons, domestic responsibilities lose their primacy. In describing her work in the family enterprise, a woman explained how she had

to work 12 hours every day for a week to finish cutting the material and prepare the order. Her husband, who had made her quit her previous job for the children's sake, encouraged her to finish her work, even at the expense of her children and her domestic responsibilities.

Women petty-traders' perception of their roles differed from that of home-based producers. Work here was a central aspect of both family roles and responsibilities, and of personal identity. The majority of these women did not perceive themselves primarily in domestic terms. The economic need for employment seemed to influence their view of the work they do. Some petty-traders felt that they had no choice but to go out to work to support their families. One petty-trader reported: "*I cannot stay at home because I need the money I earn from my work*". She felt that she had to satisfy two important roles: working outside to earn an income and fulfilling her duties towards her family.

*It is tiring, too much work has to be done. After a long day in the market I have to do all the other work at home.*

While petty-traders demonstrated a strong commitment to their work, they agreed with their home-based counterparts that women should not work outside the home. They subscribed to the culturally dominant view of gender roles, but made an exception in their own case. This showed a contradiction between their notion of *ideal* roles for women in the abstract and their conception of *suitable* roles for themselves.

These contradictions can be traced to the wider transition the society as a whole is undergoing. MacLeod's case study (1991:45) of lower-middle class government employees in Cairo highlights women's ambivalent attitudes about their work outside the home. These women, according to the author, are torn between two contradictory ideologies. Economic ideology, linked to their class position, pushes them outside the home to work by focusing on women's responsibility to help the family. Yet this new role of "working

women" is strongly opposed by gender ideology, which asserts that women's place was within the home.

Our male respondents replying to the same question strongly opposed women working outside. They stressed that women should stay at home to look after the family. They were more likely than women to assert that family and children would suffer if the woman worked. For them, as one respondent pointed out:

*It is impossible for a woman who works outside to be a good wife and mother simply because she will have neither the time nor the energy.*

Economic necessity may force men to accept women going out to work, yet at the same time, this is justified in a way that does not jeopardise men's authority and privileged position within the household. All the male respondents agreed that both husband and wife should contribute to the household income. However, some husbands limited their acceptance to work inside the home. As one respondent reported: "*extra money will always be welcomed but under one condition: not outside the home*".

While both home-based producers and all male respondents agreed that women's outside work had a negative impact on the children, most women petty-traders did not. Petty-traders felt that their work benefited their children in one way or another. The perceived flexibility of their work, which allows them to extend their domestic responsibilities to the market, seems to contribute to such belief. It is not uncommon to find children of all age groups in the market with their trader mothers.

Women's attitudes regarding their roles can be better understood if we consider what their economic activity means to them. There is a difference in the ways women petty-traders and home-based producers define their paid work.



Most home-based producers referred in the interviews to their work as *help* and did not distinguish between their paid work and domestic work. 'Real' work, according to one home-based respondent, "*is when you work outside your home and earn an income*". Women petty-traders, on the other hand, differentiated clearly between their work in the market and their domestic work. The separation between workplace and home seemed to be an effective factor in the way women perceived their paid work.

The way women define their work influences their assessment of the importance of their contribution to the household. Women were first asked whether their paid work made a difference to the household. Differences in their responses to this question were directly related to whether or not the woman earned an income.

Most of the women petty-traders working on their own felt that their contributions were important to the household. Most women reported that their earnings improved aspects of family life. Responses such as, "*we eat better now*", "*we can buy clothes*", or "*we can invest in the children's education*", were given.

Women heads of households, working both outside and inside the home, also felt that their contribution was essential for their families, as these two statements show: "*My family could not survive without my work*", and "*I am the main provider for the household*".

Women working in family enterprises, usually as unpaid labour, felt that their contribution was not important. It seems that monetary contribution is the *valuable* one. As Sen (1990:140) explains, this perception bias tends to relate to the size of money earned rather than the amount of time and effort expended.

Women were then asked whether quitting their jobs would negatively affect the household. Women's responses to this question were also directly related to whether women received income from their work.

Women working in family enterprises felt that their husbands' work in the enterprise was far more important than theirs, and reported that quitting their work would have no tangible impact on the family. As one woman put it:

*His work is far more important than mine. I cut and sew while he does everything else. He is the one who is providing for the family.*

And another woman commented:

*He is the one who knows about the market, he can deal with the customers and travel to bring us material. He cannot be fooled in the market and no one can con him. Without him the business would have failed.*

Similarly, although some home-based producers recognised the importance of their earnings, they felt that withdrawal would not affect their families because their work was less important than their husbands'. In some cases women's earnings were equal to those of their husbands, but lack of control over their earnings made their contribution invisible. As White (1994:86) explains, women working inside the home contribute wages or unpaid labour to the household; yet their labour, though it contributes to the economic security of the family, is not thought essential.

For individual women petty-traders and female household heads, ceasing work was unthinkable as they recognised its significance in maintaining their households. As one trader explained: "*we both earn little money and if I stop he [her husband] will not be able to manage alone*".

In order to evaluate husbands' perception of their wives contributions, similar questions were directed to them. Although most male respondents acknowledged the importance of their wives' contribution to the household, few admitted that a wife's quitting her job would have a negative impact. One possible explanation for such a response is that women's income is often seen as questioning the breadwinning ability of the husband, and therefore his

superiority and authority within the household. Most husbands in our sample referred to their wives' earnings as *supplementary, extra money, and help* - all of which they could do without.

One male respondent who was running a family enterprise reported that his wife's *help* was important because if she did not work with him, he would have had to hire somebody to do her work. Women's work, in this sense, is negatively valued because it is seen as reducing expenses rather than producing income or benefits. In this way, husbands undermine the importance of their wives' work by stressing the importance of their own.

It is important at this point to investigate how women perceived the influence of their work on their power within the household. In general, most women respondents felt that their work made no difference in their level of influence within the household. Only a few women, who retained control over their incomes, felt that they have achieved some degree of independence: "*at least I do not have to ask him for money whenever I want to buy something*".

Those working in home-based family enterprises said that work worsened their situation:

*Nothing has changed except that I have more work to do. Before starting this business my husband used to nag me only about the children and now it is also the work I am doing.*

The greatest difficulty facing home-based producers was the burden of housekeeping, which actually increased when paid work was located in the home. The strain of combining work, housework, and childcare precluded any attempts to see their work differently. For them the main advantage of home-based work was that they thought it enabled them to devote more time and attention to the household and childcare. But what was an advantage for the household was simply more work for the individual.

Our discussion shows that women in both groups as well as their partners subscribed to culturally dominant views of *appropriate* gender roles for men and women. However, inconsistencies were evident between their views and their behaviour with regard to the different issues raised. That such contradictions appeared in their responses is to be expected as reality is often at odds with ideals.

### **3. Access to Extra-Domestic Relations**

Our aim in this section is to investigate whether women's access to extra-domestic networks influenced their self-perception and their bargaining power within the household. The type and location of women's work is very important to such investigation because women's access to different kinds of extra-familial relations varies accordingly. Of significance to our analysis is whether women identified with other women and men who worked in jobs like theirs. The discussion is based on the analysis of the interviews with the 22 women in the sub-sample.

It is clear that women's type of employment affects their access to extra-domestic relations. Because they are secluded, home-based producers' access was limited to kin and family relations. In addition, objection raised by husbands seemed to affect such access. Women petty-traders, on the other hand, had access to different forms of relations that their work in the market offered them.

Various accounts were given by home-based producers in describing their patterns of social interaction outside the household.

One seamstress reported:

*I do not have time to visit or socialise. I have too much work to do around the house as well as my sewing. I would like to have time to visit my sister or my relatives. The only person I really see is my mother who lives nearby. I see her once or twice a week.*

Another woman mentioned her husband's objections as the main reason for having limited interaction with her relatives and neighbours.

*He does not allow me to socialise with my neighbours because he thinks they are only a source of trouble. But I think his main concern is my work. He is right because visiting and socialising will waste my time. [The only person she sees regularly is her mother]. My mother lives nearby and she visits me all the time and helps me with the children, especially when we have a large order. I do not know what would happen to me if she was not around.*

This situation held true for all the women working in family enterprises. It was even worse for those who had no relatives living in the same neighbourhood. These women complained about loneliness and that they found nobody to turn to when they had problems and needed support. Some authors argue that when women are isolated from strong support networks they may find themselves dependent on men and more subject to male authority within the household (Caplan and Bujra 1978).

For example, Madiha, a seamstress mentioned earlier, had a close friend whom she knew through a previous job:

*My friend does not live nearby, she visits me once every three or four months. I cannot contact her because we do not have a phone.*

Madiha's husband also refused to apply for a telephone line:

*If I did, [he said], she will spend hours on the phone talking to her friends, and this will be at the expense of the work and the family.*

The general impression conveyed by the responses of home-based producers is that they were very dependent on their husbands not only in work-related matters but also as their only link to the outside world. Their seclusion in the

home limited their social interaction and hampered their self-confidence. Some of these women reported that they depended on their husbands in almost every matter of their lives.

Kin relations, however, represented an important source of support. Women utilised these ties to improve their position through both economic and moral support. For example, most women depended on their mothers or relatives in childcare while working. In other instances, kinswomen might intervene to protect the interests of the individual woman in a conflict with her husband.

For home-based producers, the isolation surrounding the work and home made it difficult for them to identify with other women doing the same work. Although some home-based producers knew several women who did the same work, they were unable to see any common interest with them. They perceived them mainly as competitors. Their responses showed some hostility; as one woman who made washing-up liquid said:

*My business is deteriorating because of them. When I started the business I was the only one who made such a product in this area and the business was doing much better. Now other women have started to do the same. The quality of their product is worse of course, but they manage to take some of my customers.*

The competition was even more intense among seamstresses living in the same area and thus vying for the same customers.

Petty-traders, on the other hand, reported that there was a great deal of cooperation in the marketplace. However, to deal with all traders as a homogenous group would be misleading. There are divisions among traders in the market in terms of their position (inside vs. outside), and the scale of their business, that is depending on whether they are petty-traders, retailers, or wholesalers. These factors created differences among the traders and influenced their relationships.

Cooperative relationships evolved mainly among petty-traders who worked in close proximity to one another. Experiencing similar difficulties in their work, individual women petty-traders turned to each other for help. When a trader had to leave her spot for one reason or another, her neighbour would watch over her stock and tend to customers. In case of emergencies such as illness which might prevent a trader from going to the market, a neighbour took charge of her stock for the duration of her absence.

Strong friendships also existed among petty-traders, as they worked in the same area together every day, exchanged experiences, and expressed interest in and concern for one another's life outside the market. Many petty-traders referred to co-traders as "*my friend*", or by saying "*she is more than a sister to me*".

Nevertheless, although women petty-traders turned to each other for assistance, competition and conflict also found expression on occasions. In general, traders competed at certain points in their work: when they were attempting to establish themselves in the marketplace, when they were buying goods to sell in the market, and when they were selling to customers (Babb 1989:160).

Differences among those who sold outside and those inside the market proper created conflicts and competition. Many indoor traders considered the presence of sellers outside the market as their main problem. As one respondent said:

*My business is not as good as it used to be because of those traders who sell outside the market. Customers find it much easier to buy from them rather than going inside the market.*

On the other hand, petty-traders situated outside the market differentiated between themselves and those inside. They considered the latter "*better off*" and envied them, as "*they can afford to pay rent and have a stall*".

However, when asked what they saw in common between themselves and other women traders, individual petty-traders working outside the market stressed common hardship and poverty. Not only did all have to work to sustain their families' livelihood, also they had to face common problems such as dealing with wholesalers or evading police raids.

In general, women petty-traders' relationships with men traders in the market were limited by the ways in which the *appropriate* behaviour between men and women was defined. Male-female patterns of interaction were rarely transformed into relationships such as friendship or partnership; most women gave men fictive kinship as they referred to male co-traders as *brothers* and never as friends. Still, they identified with them: when asked what was common between them, most traders said: "*we both have to work to support our families*". This situation holds true in the case of male petty-traders as well.

The views presented above were expressed by men and women respondents during the interviews, but our observation revealed a different picture. In reality, women petty-traders bonded with men co-traders in strong friendships, and even sometimes love relationships. Most marriages between petty-traders were among those who worked in the same marketplace. Strong rivalry and hatred also developed between men and women petty-traders. In such situations, women petty-traders become fierce; they not only swore and yelled but sometimes engaged in physical violence as well. As one woman observed, "*in the market a woman has to be strong to be able to protect herself and her work*".

On the other hand, women petty-traders inside the market, working within a family enterprise, felt no common interest with other female or male traders; they identified most with their husbands. "*We are different, I'm here just to help my husband*". This woman indicated that that her interaction with other traders, men or women, was limited because of her husband's presence: "*he does not like me socialising with other traders*". However, during one of our visits to the market, this same woman was seen chatting with another female



trader while they shared a meal. Her husband was away from the market at the time.

Relationships based on family and kin ties were the strongest in the market. One incident observed during the interviews best illustrates this point. A woman vegetable trader was having a problem with the wholesaler who refused to give her fresh produce for the day because she was not able to sell the stock she had. Since she had been given the stock on credit she could not pay for it. Her stock was over-ripe and difficult to market; not receiving fresh stock would have prevented her from mixing the two stocks and marketing them together. The trader's relatives, three daughters along with their husbands, argued her case to the wholesaler, and nearly forcing him to supply the fresh stock.

The significance of kinship as a source of solidarity is not limited to traders. Among popular classes in Cairo, family connections help poor households go around legal/bureaucratic constraints to securing shelter, obtaining jobs, and extending governmental subsidies.

Bayat (1997:3) argues that social networks that extend beyond kinship and ethnicity, remain largely casual, unstructured and non-political. The weakness of non-kinship co-operation at community level only reinforces traditional hierarchical, paternalistic relations with people depending more on local elders and problem solvers than on broad-based social activism.

#### **4. Women's View of Personal Autonomy**

Drawing on both the quantitative and qualitative data, this section examines the impact of women's work on their autonomy *vis-à-vis* men in their households (husbands or fathers). Our aim is to investigate the degree of control women felt they had over aspects of their lives. This was gauged through their ability to make decisions on personal matters and to act independently.

The discussion concentrates on two main areas. First, we consider issues of personal autonomy which may be expressed through actual behaviour such as, freedom of movement, wearing the veil, and decisions over fertility. Second, we examine women's attitudes towards wife battering, and its occurrence in their own lives.

Finally, we will apply the scale devised in this study. As mentioned earlier, (see Chapter Four), a score was created which ran from five if the husband decided everything alone, or if a woman needed her husband's permission always, to 15 if the wife decided everything alone or never needed her husband's permission. A score of 10 implied a degree of equality between husband and wife with regard to these issues.

#### **4.1. Decision-Making on Personal Matters**

##### **4.1.1 Physical Mobility**

To assess the degree to which women were able to act autonomously, they were asked whether they needed to seek a husband's permission on every decision or matter. One important aspect of woman's ability to act independently is her freedom of movement. Restrictions on women's mobility constrain their social interaction and consequently limit their access to societal resources.

Two issues relating to women's freedom of movement were raised; namely, visiting relatives or friends and going out for leisure purposes. Women respondents had to answer whether it was important for them to seek their husband's permission on these matters. Three possible answers were provided: always, sometimes and never.

Table 7.1 Decision-making on physical mobility

Issues	Women home-based producers (N) 45						Women petty-traders (N) 55					
	Always		Sometimes		Never		Always		sometimes		never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Visit relatives or friends	36	80.0	7	15.6	2	4.4	41	74.5	6	10.9	8	14.5
Go out for leisure activities	21	46.7	16	35.6	8	17.8	37	67.3	8	14.5	10	18.2

In general, Table 7.1 indicates that the overwhelming majority of women in both groups felt the need to seek their husband's permission on the two areas considered. According to customary norms in Egypt, a husband's permission is very important, and thus affirmative answers are to be expected. Responses which indicate otherwise provide a good indicator of movement away from these normative expectations (Nawar *et al.* 1995:156).

On the issue of visiting family or friends, the majority of women (80 percent of home-based producers and 74 percent of petty-traders) reported that they needed to seek their husbands' permission. Although home-based producers were better educated than petty-traders, the percentage of women petty-traders who said they never sought their husband's permission was higher.

Other studies confirm such a finding (for example Nawar *et al.* 1995:157). The authors report that in their sample, illiterate urban women were more likely than highly educated women to say that they could go visiting without seeking their husbands' approval.

Going out for leisure activities was another area in which most women in both groups reported the need to seek husbands' permission. However, Table 7.1 shows that home-based producers reported a relatively higher degree of mobility than their petty-trader counterparts. While nearly 70 percent of women petty-traders reported that they always sought their husbands' permission on such an issue, only 47 percent of petty-traders did so.

These findings reveal some contradictory trends. Although women petty-traders were outside their homes for long hours, they emphasised that

they needed their husbands' permission to go out. This apparent conflict might be explained by the tendency of respondents to report agreement with the cultural norms of their society, even when these norms are at odds with their actual behaviour. On the other hand, the opposite situation is apparent among home-based producers.

MacLeod's case study of lower-ranking female government employees in Cairo (1991:92), shows similar contradictory trends. She argues that despite women's increased opportunities for mobility -commuting everyday to their work- some traditional patterns continue to hold. Generally, these women still asked for their husbands' permission to leave the house to go shopping or visit their relatives.

In addition to the principle of going out, the destination appeared to be an important factor in assessing the degree of women's freedom of movement. During the interviews women were asked to specify the places they could go without their husbands' permission; responses among women respondents varied considerably.

Some women, mainly those working in home-based family enterprises, reported that they were not allowed to go out alone anywhere. Asking permission was therefore not an issue. Petty-traders working in family enterprises said they were not allowed to go out without permission other than to the marketplace, which they usually did it with their husbands' company.

Other individual home-based producers replied that their movement was limited to the confines of the neighbourhood. They could go to the local market for daily food shopping or to the homes of relatives and neighbours. Some women petty-traders explained that, besides going to the marketplace, which is located outside the neighbourhood, they could travel about the city for various reasons such as buying stock, or going to the hospital and the like, without seeking husband's permission.

It is important to note that for our respondents the meaning of recreation or leisure activity was very narrow. All women respondents considered visiting neighbours, or going to the local market to shop for the home as recreational activities.

#### 4.1.2 Veiling

Another important area in assessing women's autonomy was the issue of the veil. Before proceeding in our discussion, it is essential to point out that not all forms of covering the head are veiling. There are many types of head covering throughout the Middle East and North Africa that are simply part of traditional dress (Harik *et al.* 1996:129). In this study we use the term *hijab*, which means 'cover', to differentiate between *traditional* dress and the new forms of veiling, generally termed *Islamic dress*.

In our sample, all women respondents made this distinction between covering their heads and the *hijab* as a religious symbol. Nearly 66 percent of our sample wore the *hijab*. It was more widespread among home-based producers (80 percent) than petty-traders (54 percent).

In general, all women petty-traders dressed like Egyptian peasant women with a plain headscarf covered with a black cloth (*tarhah*), and a full length black traditional dress (*galabiyya*). Those who wore the *hijab* wore the same outfit but also adopted the more Islamic head-dress which covers the ears and extended to the woman's shoulders.

Those who adopted the *hijab* among home-based producers wore the Islamic head-dress, either plain or coloured, along with a full-length skirt along with a loose-fitting shirt on top or a long loose-fitting dress. Those who were not veiled dressed in the same modest way but without the head cover.

Veiled women respondents were asked who made the decision on wearing the *hijab*. Three possible answers were offered: the decision was made by the wife alone, by the husband, or jointly.

The majority of home-based producers (69 percent) said that they made the decision themselves, while the rest (11 percent) reported that it was made by either the husband or the father. Women petty-traders, on the other hand, claimed that the decision was exclusively theirs.

It has to be noted here that the *hijab* is a relatively new phenomenon. It hardly existed in the 1960s and in the 1970s, with the rise of the Islamic current, it started to appear among university students and the middle classes. However, the following two decades saw it spreading into other social strata, and it has since become the normative dress for most lower-class Muslim women.

When asked why they decided to veil, the answers varied. For some it was mainly for religious reasons: "*to be a good Muslim woman*", or "*it is God's order*". For other women it was the general adoption of the *hijab*: "*everyone is wearing the hijab now*", or "*it is not acceptable for a married women to walk around without the hijab*". The husband's wish was also mentioned as a reason for taking up the *hijab*.

For most women the *hijab* was associated with 'respectability': "*people respect a veiled woman*", or "*it protects women's reputation*". Wearing the *hijab* should be understood as a spreading norm, especially for middle-aged, married women.

#### **4.1.3 Fertility**

In the early 1960s, the Egyptian government launched a national family planning programme which was extended in the mid-1970s. The programme was set up primarily with demographic goals. The programme was referred to as a "birth control campaign", but, such emphasis proved unpopular. Thus, the government later adopted the term "family planning" (Ezzat 1994:166).

The programme has over 3,000 clinics nationwide. Available statistics suggest that the assessment of success in reducing fertility in Egypt has been mixed. During the past two decades, there has been an increase in the age of marriage. The percentage of women 16 years and older who were never married rose from 12 per thousand to 20 per thousand. Moreover, the percentage of women reporting use of contraceptives has risen from about 25 percent in 1980 to slightly over 47 percent among currently married women. Yet, total fertility remains as high as 3.9 children per woman despite the increase in the level of female education (Ibrahim 1995:63).

In Egyptian culture, as in most other cultures, women's reproductive function strengthens their status, and defines their existence as women. A woman unable to bear children is *dispensable*. For the sake of having children a husband may use his legal right to take an additional wife. Thus, children are perceived by the majority of women as the most important tie binding the husband to his wife, and also as a means to prevent the husband from leaving her.

Decision-making about fertility was assessed by asking women two questions: who decided on the size of the family, and on the use of contraceptives. Three answers were given (decision made by the wife, by the husband, or jointly). Table 7.2 summarises the results.

Table 7.2 Fertility decision-making

Issues	Women home-based producers (N) 45								Women petty-traders (N) 55							
	N/A		Wife		husband		Both		N/A*		wife		Husband		both	
Who decides on...	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Family size* (no. of children)	10	22.2	8	17.8	8	17.8	19	42.2	3	5.5	17	30.9	10	18.2	25	45.5
Use of contraceptives**	6	16.6	17	37.8	1	2.2	12	26.7	16	30.2	23	41.8	3	5.5	11	20.0

\* women with no children.

\*\* Married and do not use contraceptives.

One striking finding is that the number of women who reported not using any form of contraception was much higher among petty-traders (29 percent) than among home-based producers (13 percent). This shows an attitude among

the home-based producers towards a 'modern' family with fewer children. The difference in the two groups of women is also apparent in the number of children. While home-based producers have an average of 3 children for each woman, petty-traders have 4.2 children.

The decision to limit family size is seen as a 'modern' attitude. Having a large number of children, especially boys, was and still is a measure of strength and pride. Additionally, in rural areas and poor urban areas, children are considered as economic assets. In those areas, children enter the labour market at a very young age and thus are able to contribute to the family income. For modern urban families, in which children are expected to progress through education to a reasonable stage, children are considered a liability.

As for the question regarding family size, Table 7.2 shows that the majority of women in both groups reported making such decisions jointly with their husbands (42 percent of petty-traders and 45 percent of home-based producers). The proportion of petty-traders who reported that they had the final say on this matter is higher (30 percent) than that of home-based producers (17 percent).

In matters related to contraception, women in both groups reported that they were most likely to make such a decision. Nearly 42 percent of women petty-traders and almost 38 percent of home-based producers said that they alone have the final say. Husbands were the least likely to make such decisions alone. Joint decision-making regarding the use of contraceptive methods was much lower than in decisions related to family size (20 percent of petty-traders and 26 percent of home-based producers).

However, this does not mean that women have complete independence in these areas. Husbands exercise more control than these figures indicate. During the interviews some women reported that having another child might not be their desire or choice. However, their husbands' insistence and



pressure (by threatening to take a second wife) forced the woman to accept. One woman said:

*After my first baby, a girl, I did not want to get pregnant again immediately. My husband was very annoyed because he wanted a son. He would not let me use contraceptives. Finally I gave up.*

Eazzat (1994) reviewed several micro studies showing that men have greater control than women in these issues. Men not only have the final say in family size, they also decide on the method of contraceptive used by their wives. Male contraceptive use is minimal since Egyptian society views birth control as the responsibility of women. Both women and men consider male contraceptives as 'degrading to masculinity'. On the other hand, many women find difficulty gaining their husbands' permission to use contraceptives themselves.

On decisions related to the personal matters discussed above, the majority of women in both groups scored 10 (60 percent of home-based and 52.8 of petty-traders), which indicates a degree of equality and a larger room for negotiation as more decisions are taken jointly.

The percentage of women petty-traders who scored 15 was slightly higher (37.7 percent) than that of home-based producers (28.8 percent). This result shows that women in both groups felt that they have a high degree of personal autonomy.

The lowest score of 5, which implied total male control over such decisions was obtained by 11.4 percent of home-based producers and 9.4 percent of petty-traders.

## **4.2. Wife Battering**

Our focus in this section is on the acceptability and incidence of wife battering among women respondents in the two groups. We also investigate the impact of factors such as education and place of work on this issue.

To illustrate women's attitudes towards wife battering, two questions were formulated. The first question was whether women believed that a husband had the right to beat his wife. The second question was whether the respondent had been beaten by her husband at least once. Only two answers were offered: yes or no. This issue was further discussed in the in-depth interviews with both women and men.

In Egypt, little reference is made in the literature to domestic violence against women. Nevertheless, aside from casual references in a few studies which deal with the legal status of Egyptian women, two studies have dealt directly with this issue. The first study (Zaalouk 1989) concentrates mainly on wife battering. The second (Bahi-eddin 1993) considers several forms of violence against women both inside and outside the home.

Both studies suggest that wife battering is a widespread phenomenon in Egypt, cutting across different social classes. The main causes of domestic battering, according to the authors, can be traced back to economic reasons, the wife's lack of obedience, or *deviant* behaviour.

The right of a husband to *discipline* his wife is universally accepted in Egyptian society. This acceptance is justified by claiming that such a norm is extracted from the Islamic *Sharia* which allows for wife beating (Zaalouk 1989:20).

According to the dominant interpretations of the Islamic tradition, the Quran mentions beating wives under very specific conditions. Culturally this has been translated to mean that men have an unconditional right to *discipline* and *punish* their wives when the latter *misbehave*. Misbehaviour here ranges from verbal arrogance or inefficiency in housework to infidelity. Extreme violence against women is acceptable by society when the question of honour or chastity is at stake (Zaalouk 1989:22).

The Demographic and Health Survey of Egypt (DHS 1995) indicates that the violent treatment of women within marriage is common. In this survey, around one in every three married women claimed to have been beaten at least once since they married, most often by their husbands. Among women who had been beaten, 45 percent had been beaten at least once in the previous year, and 17 percent three or more times during the year. Whether they themselves had been beaten or not, most married women agreed that husbands were justified in beating their wives.

Our findings suggest that wife battering is common and widely accepted by both men and women in our sample. Table 7.3 provides a general picture of women respondents' attitude towards wife battering.

Table 7.3 Attitude to wife battering by women's selected background characteristics

Background characteristics	Men have the right to beat their wives	
	Yes	No
<b>Place of work</b>		
Home-based producer	17	28
Petty-traders	32	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Level of education</b>		
Illiterate	42	28
Reads & write	2	9
Less than 5 schooling	-	3
more than 5 schooling	5	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>51</b>

In general, women respondents were almost equally divided between those who condoned wife battering (49 percent) and those who did not (51 percent). Table 7.3 indicated that education was strongly associated with lower rates of acceptance of wife beating. Higher rates of agreement was found among illiterate women (60 percent), in contrast with 31 percent among those with a higher level of education.

The DHS (1995:208) shows that a lower agreement with wife beating was found among women working outside and earning an income as compared with women who did not earn an income. In contrast to such a finding, our

data revealed a weak association between working outside the home and support of wife beating. While 58.2 percent of petty-traders agreed that husbands had the right to beat their wife, only 37.8 percent of the home-based producers agreed.

This could be related to different ways women in both groups perceived the relationship between husband and wife. Women petty-traders are typically more avid defenders of traditions when it comes to power relations and authority within the household, an attitude which informs their views about men's rights over women. Home-based producers' views, on the other hand, were affected by a more modern understanding of egalitarian relationship between partners.

Similarly, when we consider the incidence of wife beating in our sample, the data showed that the proportion of women who agreed with wife battering was higher than that of those who reported being beaten at least once (49 and 44 percent respectively). The majority of home-based producers (80 percent) reported not being beaten as compared to only 34.5 percent of the petty-traders.

During the interviews most women respondents reported that they had been beaten at least once since they had married. Among those who said that they were never beaten, mainly home-based producers, none questioned a man's right to beat his wife. However, responses such as "*a man who beats his wife is not a good man*", and "*a husband is not always justified in beating his wife*" were given. When referring to their own cases, women specified certain qualities in their husbands to explain why they did not beat them, for example "*my husband is a kind man*". They also stressed their *obedience* and *good behaviour* as additional reasons for not being beaten.

Women petty-traders, who sometimes retaliate with physical violence against their husbands, claimed that men must *discipline* their wives when necessary.

It is important at this point to investigate whether the level of husbands' education had an impact on wife battering. The data indicates that wife battering cut across all educational levels. However, the higher the level of the husband's education the less likely he is to beat his wife. Among the 44 percent of men who beat their wives, 65 percent had no education, 25 percent had less than five years of schooling, and only 10 percent had more than five years of schooling.

When asked about their opinion concerning wife battering, men respondents' main interest was to affirm their authority, whether they were for or against the issue. They responded in two different ways.

The husband of a petty-trader said:

*As the head of the family the man has the right to discipline his wife when she misbehaves. God gave us [men] this right because it is our responsibility to protect the family.*

The husband of a home-based producer commented:

*A real man would not beat a woman no matter what. A wise man would resort to other ways to correct misbehaviour or resolve disputes in his family.*

The main reported causes of wife battering among our respondents, men and women, were financial matters. Some women mentioned the refusal to hand over her income, buying things for the children without her husband's permission, and spending money, as typical reasons. Husbands referred to reasons such as their wives concealing their income, mismanaging the money by spending too much, and wives "*demanding too much and always asking for more money*".

Other reasons were also given by the respondents. Most female respondents mentioned a *wife's refusal to have sex with her husband*. Male respondents, on the other hand, mentioned a *wife's rudeness* or lack of *obedience*. As one

respondent said, *"a woman who does not show respect to her husband should be disciplined"*.

*Deviant behaviour*, such as chatting or joking with other men, was also mentioned as a *legitimate* reason for wife battering by both men and women respondents. *"A woman deserves to be beaten if she acts in a way that affects her reputation and her husband's"*.

Domestic violence can be seen as an expression of personal frustration and despair. Given the difficulties men face in fulfilling their traditional gender role, they perceive women's income as a potential challenge to their breadwinning capacities upon which their authority rests. Frustrated by society, they turn their anger and aggression towards their family and towards women (Safilio-Rothschild 1990; Zaalouk 1989).

In Egypt, as discussed above, the problem is exacerbated by the universal, unquestioned male authority in the family inherent in the prevailing gender ideology and the dominant interpretation of Islam.

## **5. Summary**

In this chapter we have examined the impact of women's type of work on their perception of gender roles, gender relations, and their personal autonomy.

Our discussions have shown that women's participation in a particular type of employment seems to have some influence on their self-perception. In the areas of personal autonomy and mobility considered above, women's responses in both groups exhibited different levels and different expressions of autonomy. Home-based producers expressed a higher degree of autonomy in their personal opinions regarding certain decisions, yet their behaviour was less autonomous. Petty-traders, on the other hand, reversed the situation.

Their personal views conformed to the dominant ideals, yet their behaviour reflected different orientations.

Several studies consider education as the factor most strongly related to women's personal autonomy (Nawar *et al.* 1995; Moghadam 1993). However, this does not hold true in the case of home-based producers. The isolation surrounding home-based production, the limited economic benefits that women can gain, and the *invisibility* of their work all reinforce their dependence on their male partner, and thus their submission to their authority. Primarily committed to their home and family, they view their work as secondary to their domestic roles. Their self-esteem is primarily derived from the domestic sphere and from family relations.

Working outside the home offered petty-traders the opportunity to define themselves not in domestic terms but the identity of their earning capacity and their perceived commonality with the other traders. Moreover, the skills that these women gained from their work in the market, such as hard bargaining and the ability to face work-related challenges, helped them develop more effective strategies for coping and enhancing their self-confidence and lessened their dependence on their husbands.

However, like all poor women, the motivation behind work for these women was not the desire for self-esteem or personal autonomy but rather to support the family. Moreover, the meagre incomes they earned would never provide them with economic independence, and their illiteracy contributed to accepting dominant views as their personal opinion.

Lower levels of education, of themselves and of their husbands among petty-traders, seemed to take their toll in terms of increased exposure to marital violence and wife battering.

Women's greater influence within the household and greater personal independence appear to rely on a combination of factors: education, outside work, and access to and control over income. Yet such personal

achievements do not challenge the male authority within the household or the dominant views of gender roles, as Kibria argues:

When patriarchal structures remain in place despite certain changes, limited transformations in the relations between women and men may occur without deep shifts in men's power and authority (1996:207).



## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **1. Introduction**

We began this study by presenting two prototypical cases: the lives and struggles of two women, Reda and Fatma. They each belonged to one of the two groups of working women considered in our research: those who are home-based ('secluded') and petty traders ('non-secluded'). From this initial starting point, in the subsequent chapters we discussed women's working lives and the dynamics of the domestic household. Our aim was to examine the impact of two different types of working life on the perceptions of women of their position in the household - in terms of access to resources and decision-making.

The initial focus of the study was on the place of work, this defining the difference between the two groups of women. However, during the work, it emerged that another aspect was important: the specific social organisation of work. Incorporating the social organisation of work introduced a further subdivision of the women in the two groups into those working independently ('own-account' workers), and those collaborating in a family enterprise. In our sample, the majority of home-based producers (62 per cent) operated in a family enterprise as compared to only 21 per cent of the petty-traders. Women's access to and control over their earnings was also an important factor affecting their perception of their power within the household.

By working with, and under the supervision of, her husband, Reda was part of a family enterprise. Fatma, on the other hand, was an own-account trader. The two women stood at the opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of the degree of control and power that they perceive they have within the

household. The petty-traders working independently reported the highest degree of participation in decisions making in the household. These include decisions related to their work, household financial arrangements, their own income, and to their children. Women home-based producers working in a family enterprise, on the other hand, felt they had the lowest degree of control in the same issues.

## **2. Tradition and Innovation: a Methodological Note**

Although the term is much used, 'tradition' is both vague and generally subjective. Much of what passes for traditional behaviour is in fact of quite recent origin, and the real practices of the past, insofar as we know what they were, are rarely reproduced in an authentic form simply because such practices cannot be removed from a different way of life without damage. Romanticised – and sanitised – fragments of tradition, stylised elements rather than ways of life, are cultural symbols which perhaps comfort, but do so without harm (Hobsbaum and Rager 1992).

We have referred here to traditional practices or dress without referring to the complexities and contradictions concealed by the term. Thus, consider the case of dress. Up to the 1970s, it was 'traditional' for Egyptian urban women to wear ordinary European dress, including the same forms of head covering. Indeed, the more active women had fought long and hard before and after the second World War to win the privileges of freedom of choice in dress. European dress was a statement of modernity and perhaps, secularism, as well as a sharp differentiation from rural women with *baladi* dress – that is, a head scarf with a usually loose long dress. The rural style is partly reproduced in the clothes worn by the market traders, although they may now – unlike their rural counterparts – cover the colours with a black outer garment when out of their homes.

None of these three styles of dress includes the dress of the home-based workers, the 'secluded'. This consists of Islamic head-dress, the *hijab*, which

covers the ears and extend to the woman's shoulders along with a full-length skirt or loose-fit dresses.

The Islamists have thus created a new form of uniform, a new mode of making a statement to society about who the woman (and more, importantly, the husband) is, what type of family they are, and in a contemporary idiom, not an archaic one.

The point is not restricted to forms of dress. Thus, it is not 'traditional' for the majority of Egyptian women to be secluded, to be restricted to their own homes, although it was 'traditional' in the nineteenth century for many upper class women. Egyptian upper class women - along with their husbands and fathers – have long since abandoned any such restrictions. On the other hand, the majority of women in the past, rural women, were not secluded – household management demanded they fetch water from the public well, assist men in farming, take food to their menfolk in the fields.

Thus, seclusion for our sample of home-based workers can only be seen as either an aspiration to an archaic symbol of upper class life or as an entirely new idiom, a response to the modern problems of rapid social change.

In sum, seclusion – and the favoured forms of dress – are innovations, special forms encouraged by the Islamist tendencies as a statement about modern society, modern problems and modern reactions. Of course, in order to induce people to accept the innovation, it is made part of an argument about returning to the original Islam of the Quran, but this presentational issue should not conceal the innovatory character of seeking Islamic forms within a modern society.

### **3. Women in Transitional Egypt**

Living in a society in a state of transition, vibrant with socio-economic and political changes, necessarily shapes the changing ways in which women see

themselves and seek to present themselves to the rest of society. To better understand such effects, we presented a brief account of the changes taking place in Cairo during the past decades. Our discussion covered the broader processes – urbanisation, economic growth, the transformation of ways of life, and the desperate material and moral problems of poor settlements. We focused particularly on the implications of the failure of the Nasser grand – and generally, secular – project of national liberation, and the subsequent emergence and growth of the Islamic movement.

How did these broader changes affect gender roles and relations as they were lived and practised, and what was the role of ideology and cultural beliefs in shaping the perceptions and self-images of women and men?

The past decades have witnessed radical changes in the situation of women in terms of education and employment opportunities. Perhaps one of the most striking measures of this change is in female access to education and the labour market. Areas in the past supposedly exclusively monopolised by men. However, dramatic as these changes appear, they seem to be accompanied by a perverse counter-trend – a new exaggeration of gender inequalities in the new Islamism.

Increasing participation of women in the labour force was the result of the educational boom during the 1960s and the new job opportunities which grew immensely as a result of the restructuring of the Egyptian economy. In 1952 only 45 percent of primary-school age children attended schools, by 1960 the figures had risen to 65 percent, and by 1967 to 80 percent. Female enrolment continued to rise faster than male, and the gap between the two rates gradually decreased, stabilising by the 1970s at all levels to about two males to each female.

The most dramatic increase, however, in women's participation in education occurred in higher education – at universities and other institutes of higher education. Women's enrolment rose rapidly and at a much faster pace than men's. The ratio of males to females, which had stood at 13.2 to 1 in 1953-54,

was 1.8 to 1 in 1976. Thus, the higher the level of education, the greater the degree of formal equality there seemed to be.

However, literacy rates among women remained lower than among men. Around 62 percent of Egyptian males are literate compared to only 38 percent of Egyptian females. Even though education remained limited in the rural areas and among the poor classes, the 'infiltration' of women in schools, workplaces, and on the street, represented a wide and radical break with what was seen as the past system.

Women's access to education – and perhaps, a marked change in labour demand - resulted in a radical change in the number of employed women and their pattern of employment. Officially, women formed 5.4 percent of the labour force in 1960, by 1986 the figure rose to over 10 percent. However, as discussed in Chapter Three, all such figures must be considered with great caution. In general, these numbers ignore most informal types of employment, which are so important for much of Cairo's population, male and especially female.

However, there is also evidence that women's participation in paid formal employment has been increasing quite rapidly. For example, while Egyptian women held only 3.3 percent of positions in industry in 1961, by 1976 they formed 13 percent of the industrial labour force. And while women held only 4.5 percent of clerical positions in the 1960s, by 1976 they held 27.4 percent of these jobs.

The law prescribes that there should be no discrimination in wages on the basis of gender; that is, women and men are supposed to receive the same wages for doing the same job. In reality, women are relegated to the least skilled, lowest paying jobs and their chances for advancement are much less than those of men's. Perhaps as a result, there has been some tendency to a widening gap between the average wages for males and those of females. This is especially true in manufacturing industries, where tasks are strictly gender-defined.

These changes in women's employment patterns and the increase in their participation in the labour force thus challenge the conventional perception of gender roles. In seeking employment women are assuming a 'new' role, one in the past reserved for men, and which may intensify tension and conflict.

However, reality and economic pressures have brought with them a view that women should contribute to their family income: indeed, the expected style of life of a modern family, even when it is poor, seems to require two adult wage earners and perhaps this reflects the decline of male earnings relative to contemporary costs of reproduction. This, in turn, has created a conflict for both men and women. Women's employment has brought about a change in the ideology to legitimate working, as long as it occurs within certain limits, as a way to strengthen the family by ensuring its economic support. Yet, the employment of women was justified in terms that reinforced, rather than transformed, their assignment to the domestic sphere and the wife-mother role.

Confusion and anxiety are exacerbated by the fact that, on the one hand, the state supports the idea of male hegemony and enforces it by law, while, on the other, its economic plans and programmes, in conjuncture with the material necessities of the poor, promote a different reality.

The Nasser regime was active in enacting legislation to ensure the protection and welfare of women workers. Labour laws guaranteed equal rights and equal wages, and made special provisions for married women and mothers. These provisions were expanded under Sadat to facilitate labour market participation by women. Thus, both regimes assumed and promoted increased employment of women.

Yet, on the other hand, the regime has in its social regulation, drifted increasingly towards enhancing male rights. Under the constitution of 1971, more conservative views of women's rights and duties were expressed. For example, it is stated that women are equal to men in every respect as long as

the principle does not contradict the Islamic *Sharia*. This means that women's rights were made conditional rather than absolute.

Moreover, certain laws related to personal status and family relations continued to carry a clear discriminatory bias against women. For example, the right to leave the house and thus, by implication the right to work outside the home were not granted to women. On the contrary, the need for women to negotiate such rights with their husbands was emphasised.

Since the system holds, and the law confirms, that a woman's place is in the home and that her access to work is subject to her husband's authorisation, work for women becomes a privilege and not a right. Moreover, the husband is encouraged to perceive his wife and her income as belonging to him, since she needs his permission to earn that income.

One can imagine the frustration and resentment that the male (not to speak of the female) is likely to experience, trapped as he is between a law that gives social sanction to his right to control his wife's movements and the economic necessity that forces him to allow her to take a job. The gap between the gender ideology reflected by the social laws and the way most people live their lives creates severe and continuing contradictions that cannot be resolved at the level of the individual family.

Emphasising the link between the supposed traditional definition of masculinity encourages an ambivalent feeling in men, both towards the dependent wife for whom they cannot provide, and towards the working one who threatens their authority, which rests on their ability to provide, between a social subordination founded in part upon the male role as sole provider for his family, and the emerging equality of work and earning capacity. Given such extremes, it is surprising that there is not more family violence rather than less.

Women also experience such ambivalent attitudes towards their work. Economic need and modernisation strongly encourage women to work and to

do so where the earnings are highest, outside the home; indeed, it becomes a duty for a woman, part of her responsibility to her children to contribute to the family income by using her new educated capacities. Yet, the prevailing cultural images and ideas, embedded in the expectations of many husbands, locate women's place within the home and thus supposedly make impossible the neglect of family duties implicit in a working role. Women even suffer more as they have to combine their work outside the home with their domestic responsibilities, especially for low-income groups.

The fact that people have come to adhere even more strongly to 'traditional' images of gender roles that have nothing whatsoever to do with real life contributes to making male-female relationships one of the most painful sources of tension and conflict. Domestic violence – against women and children – and the divorce rate bear witness to the explosive forces released in the crucible of the family.

The prevailing ideology, the legal and educational systems, as well as the labour market were all sites of both the construction and reproduction of gender inequality and the continuing subordination of women, and of the material necessities forcing increased equality and the undermining of male authority.

It is the perverse counter-trend towards the exaggeration of gender inequality which is most striking. The rise of overt Islamism and the spread of softer forms of religiosity since the 1970s, has created new forms of subordination in the name of reinforcing traditional gender roles. For the Islamists, all problems of society were results of 'modernity' (a term as contradictory as 'traditional'). Such modernity brought moral degradation, decline of family values, and the corruption of women. Within this, there has been a revival of the doctrine that wives are the repository of the honour of husbands, so that their behaviour, is thus crucial to male hegemony. The Islamists have identified an agenda of issues, called 'traditional', of symbols, customs, images, and behaviour as a counter-trend to a supposedly modernising world. The simplicity of the



dichotomy betrays its doubtful validity, but also its power to grip the minds of angry young men and women.

The implications for women were powerful. The Islamic movements were preoccupied with the question of cultural identity and authenticity, and they saw women as central in the rising Islamic discourse, for not only were women seen as a symbol of the family but they play a crucial role in the socialisation of the next generations; they are the transmission belts of cultural values and tradition, of the sustainability of a modern Islam.

Adoption of the *hijab*, the veil, among women was the most visible expression of the rising influence of Islamic sentiment. It is significant that it began as a movement among those aspiring to the intelligentsia. Veiling first made its appearance in the mid-1970s among university students in major urban centres, such as Cairo, Alexandria, and Assiut.

These were educationally and professionally upwardly mobile women- or at least, they possessed the abilities and aspirations of the upwardly mobile, though society might frustrate their aspirations. They were confronted with a city life in which vivid inequalities, consumerism and materialism, coexisted. The women were generally the first generation in their family to emerge socially into a gender integrated world, where men and women mix on university campuses, in crowded buses and trains, and in the workplace. In the face of such stresses, novelties and shocks, they opted to make a statement to the rest of the world in their choice of dress that proclaimed educational and professional upward mobility.

Among those choosing to express their association with the Islamic movement, the *hijab* represented a protest against the growing modernity and supposed westernisation of the cities, while for others, it provided a means for coping with such modernity. However, through its infiltration into the middle and lower classes, *hijab* became the 'respectable' dress code, such that more and more poor young and middle aged women felt obliged to adopt it.

Thus, the new cultural colonisation of women, championed by the Islamic tendency, should not be seen simply as a reactionary or regressive trend, it is a defensive reaction against the profound changes in both gender roles and the contradictions emerging through those changes; it is an attempt to create a new way of life which accommodates modernism (as a university student in, say, physics) and a new set of simple symbols of the supposedly traditional.

#### **4. Work and Ideology: the Contradictions**

Our data suggest that the effects of employment on women's perceptions are contradictory. Most women and men in our study expressed a contradiction between their views of women's ideal roles as full-time homemakers and the reality which forces them to accept women's wage work.

In general, our results show that the type of work has an impact on women's perceptions. They also indicate that women's control over their work seems to correlate closely with the degree of separability in economic activity between husband and wife.

With regard to their work, own-account women petty-traders felt they had a higher degree of control over all aspects related to their work, from the rhythm of work to financial matters and dealing with wholesalers. Being in the market, away from home and from their husbands, and bargaining with customers (some of whom were men) required independence and quick decision-making – as well as an aggressive defence of their own interests in a context of frequently aggressive behaviour.

On the other hand, own-account home-based producers viewed their control as limited to certain areas of their work, such as the daily routine of work and dealing with customers. Being secluded at home, they depended on their husbands to handle most outside activities such as dealing with suppliers and the maintenance of work tools (for example, sewing machines). Thus, here male family authority became structured by employer-employee relationships,

and vice versa, so that collaboration in the family and at work mutually exacerbated co-operation.

In the family enterprises, both outside and inside the home, the husband controlled the business. In effect, the women became unpaid labourers. However, petty-traders had to assume responsibilities on their own, handling the business in the absence of husbands, selling and receiving new stocks. As for home-based producers, the husbands had the absolute control, they even dictated the amount of time women had to spend working.

While outside employment had an impact on some aspects of women's behaviour, their personal views were left intact. Thus, individual women petty-traders, working on their own, who had shown a higher degree of control over their work and other aspects of their lives, were the ones who agreed most with wife battering.

For the home-based, the notion of wife battering was degrading, associated with men from uneducated lower classes. They did not however question men's 'sacred' right to discipline their wives, but stressed that a good woman - like themselves - would never 'compromise' herself in the eyes of her husband. Taking into consideration that disciplining one's wife is a right granted in the *Quran*, these women could not take an outright position against it. They opted to exempt themselves from such wrath for being good women or being married to good men.

Being out of the home in the market, yet women still reported that they needed their husband's permission to go out. Contradictions also arose when considering financial matters. Although women petty-traders had to handle all the financial deals in the market, the majority still claimed to seek their husbands' approval before taking a loan or joining saving clubs (*gamiyat*) with their fellow traders (of course, the practice might be very different).

In doing so, women supposedly accorded men the right to deny or accept their requests. In practice, they spent considerable time and effort seeking to

alter their husbands' decisions. Thus, their attempt at renegotiating some aspects of their lives took place within the defined acceptable boundaries of gender roles, rather than in challenging them.

For home-based producers, on the other hand, the contradictions were more subtle. While their views expressed a more egalitarian relationship with their husbands by stressing joint decision-making in some of the issues raised. The in-depth interviews showed a different picture.

In personal mobility, the majority of the women reported joint decision-making. The interviews showed that they portrayed their extra-domestic relations as severely limited and confined to family and shopping. Most reported that their husbands objected to socialising with neighbours because it interfered with work schedules or because it was simply 'undesirable'.

Contradiction is more evident in the way women perceive their work. Home-based producers defined their work merely as a *help* and viewed it as an extension of their domestic responsibility. Even in the case of own-account workers, they saw it as supplementary. They felt that their contribution, whether income or labour, was not important to the family and it could do without such work. This view was also shared by the husbands.

'Real' work for them, their husbands, and for the society at large, had to take place outside the home. The fact that they devoted the majority of their time to income-generating activities was blurred by the place where such activities occurred, at home just as with all other forms of work such as washing or cleaning. This was convenient for husbands as they could assert their power and control behind the claim that wives were just 'helping', thus consolidating their authority and maintaining their supposed capacity to be exclusive providers and sole bread winners.

Another area of contradictions was that of access to and control over income. Access to income was limited to women working independently. Those in a family enterprise had a housekeeping allowance, the amount of which was

decided solely by the husbands. However, own-account women's control over income was, they said, dependent on the financial arrangement adopted by the household. The few who kept separate funds, all petty-traders, were the only ones who enjoyed some freedom in expenditure, a privilege denied the women who pooled their income in a common fund usually controlled by the husbands.

However, in a sharp break with the prevailing ideology, some of the own-account women retained control over a 'secret income', the income concealed from the knowledge of their husbands and consequently, kept out of the common fund for personal spending. Thus, they were doubly guilty in terms of the prevailing morality – not only did they retain some of their husbands' supposed income, but they were also dishonest in concealing it from them.

Nonetheless, the areas in which these women indicated that they spent this extra income were not personal. They reported that having extra money would allow them to buy things for their children that the husband refused to get, or even support the education of the children.

Most women referred to their income as belonging to the *family* rather than themselves but saw their husbands' income as his own. Yet they considered the husband to be the main breadwinner, which meant that his income should be the one devoted to the needs of the family. This contradictory view was shared by the husbands. Even those petty-traders who kept separate funds and considered each partner's income as his/her own, in practice, devoted all their earnings to family needs. This is implicit in the way women's work is perceived. For both partners, the only acceptable reason for women to work and earn an income is to support their families. Otherwise women should not work.

When we turn to domestic work and childcare, the type and organisation of work had no impact on the gender division of labour within the household. All our respondents considered this area as women's prime responsibility.

Husband's participation was almost non-existent. The role of the women had to extend to cover earning income for the family, but neither they, nor their husbands felt that this new responsibility should relieve them of at least part of their original duties – let alone justify a new sharing of household responsibilities.

We can see two distinctive set of contradictions. Petty-traders were trying to consolidate a 'traditional' view of the world with a reality that is removed from it. For them, their work is a mere fact of life, yet this work gives them freedom or privileges of which they are not necessarily aware.

Home-based women, on the other hand, are more educated. They are trying to present a 'modern' view of themselves and their families, and in a form which is remote from the lives of their parents and grandparents. Their response to the challenges of urbanisation and modernisation has been seclusion, and this contradicts what they have acquired in education and the necessity to earn.

The question is how to understand these contradictions and account for them. We need to reformulate our original questions concerning the impact of the type of work on women's perceptions, to that of how women's perceptions affected their choice of work type – that is, how their prior social programming, within the specific historical context of their lives, led to their choice of work, rather than how the choice of work on its own produced some form of social transformation.

Women petty-traders belong to a stable ancient occupation, they inherit the characteristics required for the work from their parents and grandparents. These women possess the necessary occupational characteristics of wit, aggressiveness and resourcefulness. They are in general not aspiring to upward mobility, nor does the type of social change being experienced all around them necessarily undermine what they have inherited – as it does for the home-based women. Most of them have spent all their lives trading, sometimes in the same spot. Only when they married did they move to a

different area with their husbands, but to continue the same occupation. Their perception is in accordance with the conservative ideology but their behaviour deviates to a great extent, without the one necessarily affecting the other: a form of tolerated social hypocrisy, we presume, covers the gap between behaviour and moral imperative.

Participation in trading for these women was not a real choice. Coming to trading through the family, they received the necessary training as young girls helping their parents in the market. As apprentices, the children learn the economics of the job and the manner of dealing with clients.

For these women, autonomy, achieved through outside work, is conditioned by poverty which entails that they expect to work outside from an early age and commits them to a lifetime of hard work. This is not a break in their expectations or way of life such that they need to make a compromise, paid work but in seclusion. Indeed, many of them take to their work naturally, enjoy it and in no way feel that their role as a woman or mother by this means undermined.

The situation of home-based producers is sharply different. They are often the first generation of recent migrants from villages and small towns with some education. That they – or their parents - migrated at all shows an aspiration to upward social mobility, an immense attempt to relocate themselves in an alien and rapidly changing environment as a means to achieve either for themselves or, if not, for their children, a higher social position. Accordingly, they opt for a more 'modern' way of living. They differentiate themselves from the lower-classes by referring to traditional occupation as degrading in status for them and for their families. They also differentiate themselves in terms of their dress from their mothers and 'traditional' Egyptian dress, similar to that of traders, by wearing the *hijab*.

They aspire to upward mobility, to respectability, to the ancient status of the lower middle class with a measure of refinement. They are striving to attain a higher standard of living only as a tangible – visible - measure of such

respectability, and to educate their children to higher level to guarantee them better chances and careers which will then reflect on the real character of the parents, themselves in essence of higher status but frustrated by the accidents of birth and thus poverty.

The desires and hopes to change their social position were fuelled by the promise of Nasserism, of mass advance and liberation, during the 1960s and early 1970s. As we have noted, that secular project failed, inflicting on those who had trusted it, much pessimism and introspection symbolised by the painful 1967 defeat at the hands of Israel and the ensuing severe economic difficulties. For the poor but ambitious, the failure of the national project and of their own individual carers combined the tragedy – not only were they unable to sustain upward mobility in terms of improved income and status and especially, improved life chances for their children often they failed to maintain their class position and were threatened by downward mobility. After all the sacrifices, material necessity seemed to drive them backwards toward the ranks of the hated destitute, for them, the despicable layers at the bottom of society against whom they have for so long measured their own superiority. The changes mean not only that their means to achieve their expectations were curtailed, but expectations and standards advanced in society far ahead of the means to accomplish them.

The individual cannot help but suffer from such discordance between realities of everyday life and the ideas and images stamped into people's minds. The wider the gap between reality and aspiration, the greater the suffering and more serious the conflict and tension within the person may be.

In a sense, by choosing 'seclusion', either by themselves or by their husbands, they try to mute the potential challenge to men's authority in the family as well as make a statement to society concerning their family's just claim to social advance – their husbands are the sort of men who morally will be sole providers for the family. The way they spoke about their work emphasised the importance of their husbands' work for the survival of the family. The ability of the husband to provide well for his family – and not



exploit his wife as a worker - is a way of affirming their distance from lower-classes (the poor) and a demonstration of their higher status.

Such efforts to reinforce supposed traditional gender roles and inequality and the consolidation of husband's authority is not simply a result of socialisation in a cultural tradition. They also reflected responses of both women and men to severe suffering of frustrated aspirations and the contradictions in a specific period of transition in society as a whole.

Islamist visions of women's role, government actions on women's legal and political status, and cultural assertions against the West and western modernity, are all reinforcing a particular identity, supposedly 'traditional', thus contributing to a reaffirmation of women's essential role within the home. Gender roles are - at least, in the ideological sphere - being reinforced rather than redefined.

Rada and Fatma are creatures of their age, what we have called 'the transition' - there are several transitions, from Egypt as a backward imperial dependency to an independent national power (and the period of subjection still plays a powerful role in contemporary attitudes even though it is half a century ago), from the great 'Third Worldist' nationalist self-emancipation project of the 1950s and 1960s to an open global economy in the 1980s and 1990s, from a supposed socialism in which the material needs of all should be met by the State to competitive labour markets where all must provide for themselves, from a world in which the secular and scientific claimed the truth in all questions to the vigorous reinvention of Islam as the intellectual key to understanding both this world and the next, and above all, for Rada and Fatma, from a world of strict gender definition in which women were marginalised in all the important decisions, to one in which they can sense the possibility of equality. The changes are so radical, it is hardly surprising that there are contradictory trends, perversities and counteractions. But the logic of Egypt's continued economic expansion might suggest that in the longer term - perhaps too late for Rada and Fatma - ideology will be obliged to catch up with the material existence of Egyptian urban women. The resolution may not

necessarily be recognisable in the old terms – enhanced male dominance and the withdrawal of women from paid work or the severe transformation of household mores to acknowledge a new breadwinner, earning through paid labour the right to be considered an equal.

## **5. Postscript: Home Working and Empowerment**

The growing interest in women's home-based projects in Egypt by many NGOs and government agencies highlights the relevance of our study. The claim underlying such interest is that women's access to an income would improve their economic status and *empower* them.

In general, home-based work is seen as advantageous for women. The 'flexibility' in work conditions and the location of work in these activities allow women to combine their paid work with their domestic responsibilities and childcare. It is also thought that women working at home enjoy a greater degree of autonomy in deciding when and for how long they will work and at what pace.

However, promoting such an option for women perpetuates the assumption that working women should bear the responsibility for childcare and domestic work. While women and their families may have benefited from these projects in terms of generating income, access to credit, and from training, little is known about the impact of this type of work on women's personal lives and on their position within the family.

The results of this study show that home-based work can be more exhausting than going out to work because it ties domestic labour and paid work together spatially and in terms of effort. Moreover, the notion of flexibility is much exaggerated. Women in our sample reported that they had to work for long hours in order to meet deadlines and during high season. Consequently they suffer from physical problems related to the type of work they perform, and also psychological problems resulted from their isolation.

Furthermore, under such work arrangements the household becomes a workshop and family relations are strained by the need to intensify the work to increase the income. In the family enterprise the situation is even worse through the transformation of family relations into economic ones. Already disadvantaged in the family, women working in a family enterprise endure the intensified control of husbands as they assume the position of managers. The home-based solution results in more work, domestic and economic, and more subordination to men, as husbands and as bosses – and can destroy family relationships in a more deadly fashion than ordinary domestic quarrels. The man's aspiration to upward mobility now turns upon maintaining a draconian work regime over his wife – and when he fails to rise socially, it will be his wife who will be blamed for not working even harder.

This brings us back to Reda and Fatma and their options for the future. For Fatma and other own-account petty-traders, outside employment has enhanced their bargaining power within the household. However, such power is mediated through forces such as class and dominant gender ideologies, which operate to restrict women's degree of autonomy.

Being secluded at home, Reda was denied even these small improvements. Opting for something 'new', however, by choosing seclusion she is trapped in a 'traditional' reality which reinforces and reproduces her relations of inequality.

To argue that the outcome of bargaining and negotiation between husbands and wives is simply determined by economic factors such as access to resources or work is misleading. Socially and historically specific views about the rights, responsibilities, and needs of a particular individual are often more important in determining the outcome of bargaining and negotiation.

The future for both Fatma and Reda seems to be gloomy. This is because change required cannot be achieved through individual efforts and sacrifices. A change in the social order, in the ideological regime, is required to allow perceptions to catch up with the emerging reality. With rapid economic

expansion, some measure of alleviation might be possible. But only through collective organisation for the purposes of breaking the culture of isolation, challenging prevailing gender ideology, and laying the material bases for overcoming poverty, individual and collective liberation become mutually reinforcing.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **The Scale**

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FEMALE WORKERS

Questionnaire No.

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Locality \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Observations \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Questionnaire Female Workers

## I. Background Information

1. Name:

2. Age:

--	--

3. Marital status

- (01) single
- (02) married
- (03) divorced
- (04) widow

--	--

4. Level of education

- (01) illiterate
- (02) reads and writes
- (03) less than 5 years of schooling
- (04) more than 5 years of schooling

--	--

5. Place of work

- (01) inside the home
- (02) outside

--	--

6. Do you work

- (01) on your own
- (02) with your husband
- (03) with relatives
- (04) for a stranger
- (05) other (specify)

--	--

7. Current occupation

- (a) Home-based producer
- (01) tailoring and needlework
- (02) craft-work
- (03) cooking
- (04) breeding chicken
- (05) services for others
- (06) tutoring
- (07) others (specify)

--	--

(b) Petty-traders (in terms of what they sell)

(08) vegetable

(09) cooked food

(10) non-food products

(11) poultry

(12) services for others

(13) bread

--	--

**8. Years of work in present occupation**

(01) less than 5 years

(02) 5-10 years

(03) 11-15 years

(04) 16-20 years

(05) 21-25 years

(06) more than 25 years

--	--

**9. Children (if any)**

(a) number of children

--	--

(b) age

	Age	Number
1	Less than 5 years	
2	5-10 years	
3	11-15 years	
4	more than 15 years	

[if the respondent has children in schools or working  
continue with (c)]

(c) do you have children who

(01) go to school

(02) work

(03) all the above

--	--

**10. Husband information**

(a) level of education of husband (or  
brother for single women)

(01) illiterate

(02) reads and writes

(03) less than 5 years of schooling

(04) more than 5 years of schooling

--	--

(b) husband's current occupation

(father's in case of single women)

(01) unskilled worker (porter, cleaner, vendor, etc.)

(02) semi-skilled (construction, mechanic, etc.)

(03) skilled (tailor, craftwork, etc.)

(04) government employee

(05) unemployed or retired

--	--



## II. The Scale

### A. Work

Who decides on ..

	Issues	Husband* (1)	Both (2)	Wife (3)
1	Taking up paid work			
2	Place of work			
3	Rhythm of work			
4	Daily decisions			
5	Organisation of work			
6	Buying stock/raw material			
7	Financial issues			

\* Father or brother in case of single women

8. Does your husband interfere in your work?

--	--

(01) always

(02) sometimes

(03) never

### B. Control of income

Do you need husband's permission for..

	Issues	always (1)	sometimes (2)	never (3)
1	Buying for yourself			
2	Buying for children			
3	Taking personal spending money			
4	Lending money			
5	Joining saving clubs			

### C. Household financial matters and domestic work

Who decides on...

	Issues	Husband (1)	Both (2)	Wife (3)
1	Financial arrangements			
2	Daily expenditure			
3	Large expenditure			

**Does your husband ..**

	Issues	never (1)	sometimes (2)	always (3)
4	Help you with domestic work			
5	Help you with childcare			

**D. Personal matters**

Do you need your husband's permission to

	Issues	always (1)	sometimes (2)	never (3)
1	visit relatives, friends or neighbours			
2	receive visitors (relatives or friends)			
3	go out for leisure			

Who decides on ..

	Issues	Husband (1)	Both (2)	Wife (3)
4	The way you dress			
5	wearing the veil*			

\* if the respondent is veiled

**E. Family planning and child rearing**

Who decides on ..

	Issues	Husband (1)	Both (2)	Wife (3)
1	family size			
2	method of contraception*			
3	future of the children			
4	disciplining of children			

\* if the respondents used contraceptives

**5. Do you think men have the right to beat their wives?**

- (01) yes  
(02) no

--	--

**6. Does your husband beat you?**

- (01) yes  
(02) no

--	--

## **APPENDIX II**

### **INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS**

## INTERVIEW QUESTION FOR FEMALE WORKERS

Questionnaire No.

--	--	--

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Locality \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Observations \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## I. Work

1- Is this your first work? [if <no> continue with 2 &3]

2- What was your previous occupation?

3- Why did you change your job?

4- Do you have any other jobs beside your current work?  
[if yes, what are they?]

5- When did you start your current job? Why do you work?

6- Why did you choose your current job? Place of work?

7- How did you start your work? How did you learn the  
needed skills?

8- How did you obtain your start-up capital?

*If the respondent borrowed money*

9- Who did lend you the money? (husband, neighbours,  
relatives, etc.)

10- How much time do you spend on your work? (hours a  
day, days a week)

11- Do you work all year long? Or do you stop at certain  
time? If yes, why?

12- Do you get help with your work? From whom?

[if the husband helps, continue with next question]

13- What does your husband do to help? (concentrate of the husband's role)

14- What work costs do you incur? How much?	
Raw material	
Rent	
Transportation	
Interest on Loans	
Equipment	
Other (specify)	

15- Who is the one responsible for the work? Why?

[The way work is organised]

16- For home-based producers: How do you get raw material? Market the product, deal with customers and all work related decision

17- For petty-traders: How do you get the stock, choose selling place, deal with wholesaler, and all work related decisions

18- What are the main problems you encounter in your work?

19- How much do you earn? (daily, weekly, monthly)

## II. Financial arrangements and expenditure

1- Who chose the pattern or method of money management?

2- How do you organise the household budget?

3- Are you satisfied with the current method? Why?

4- Who controls the household income? Do you have access to this income? Can withdraw freely from it?

5- Who makes decisions about the household daily expenditure? Why?

6- Who decides on large expenditure (furniture, washing machine, etc.)? Why?

7- Who is responsible for the daily/weekly shopping for the household? Is there a fixed amount allocated for this?

8- Do you know how much your husband earns?

9- Does your husband know how much you earn?

10- Does your husband take a pocket money? Do you know how he spends it?

11- Does your husband contribute to the household income? How much?

12- Who spends on the following items			
Item	You	Your husband	Both of you
Food			
Cloths			
Rent			
Electricity			
Children's needs			
Children's education			
Healthcare and medication			
Other (specify)			

13- Are there any other members of you family who work? Do they contribute to household income?

14- How much do you contribute to the household income?

15- Do you take personal spending money? How do you spend it?

16- What do you do if you want to buy something that your husband objected to?

### III. Domestic work and childcare

1- How long have you been married?

2- Did you use to work before marriage? If yes, did you stop after marriage? Why?

3- Did you stop working or change you work after having children? Why?



4- What are your domestic daily duties? (Describe)

5- What are the weekly domestic tasks? (Describe)

6- Describe your normal working day.

7- Does your husband (or any other family member) help you in domestic work? What does he do?

8- How do you organise your time between domestic and paid work?

*[if the respondent has pre-school children]*

9- Who looks after your children while you work? Does your husband help? What does he do?

10- Who is responsible for disciplining the children? Planning their future?

11- Do (did) you want more children? Who decided on the family size? Why?

#### **IV. Social relations and freedom of movement**

##### **1. Home-based producers**

1- Do you get help from relatives, who? How?

2- If you have a problem (personal or financial), for whom you turn for support?

3- Do your relatives visit you? How often?

4- Do you have friends? What do you do together? (visit, go shopping, etc.)

5- To where can you go without requiring your husband's permission?

6- Describe your relationship with your customers.

7- Describe your relationship with you neighbours.

8- Do you know of women doing the same work like yourself? Describe your relationship with them.

9- Do you deal with wholesalers? What sort of problem you encounter with them?

## **2. Petty-traders**

1- Do your relatives visit you? How often?

2- Describe your relationship with you neighbours.

3- To where can you go without requiring your husband's permission?

4- Describe your relationship with female co-traders.

5- Do you have problems dealing with them?

6- Who helped or instructed you when you first started working?

7- Describe your relationship with male co-traders.

8- If you encounter problems (personal or work related) whom you turn to for support?

9- With regard to wholesalers, do you have problems dealing with them?

10- What sort of problems you face with the authorities? How do you handle them?

#### **V. Opinion Questions**

1- Which is better for women, to stay at home or to work? Why? What about yourself?

2- Do you like your work? If you had the choice, would you choose another? What?

3- Is your work Important for the family? How? Is it as important as your husband's?

4- If you stopped working would this negatively affect your family?

5- Did you need your husband's approval to work? What would you have done if he didn't approve?

6- If your husband were able to support the family on his own, would you have stopped working? Why?

7- In your opinion, what is the roles for men and women in the family?

8- What do you think about the veil? Why are you veiled? (in the case of veiled women)

9- Do you see it as men's right to control the family? Why?

10- In what way did you work affect your position in the family? (in terms of decision making)

11- How do you describe a man who beats his wife? Why would a husband beat his wife? What about you?

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR HUSBANDS

Questionnaire No.

--	--	--

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Locality \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Observations \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## I. Work

1- What is your current occupation? For how many years have been in this occupation?

2- Have you changed work before? If yes, why?

3- Do you have other jobs? What?

4-How did you get into this occupation?

5- How did you obtain your start-up capital?

6- Do other family members work with you? What do they do?

[All]

7- How much time you spend in your work? (hours per day, days per week)

8- What do you usually do after work?

9- Do you work all year long or do you stop at certain times? Explain?

10- How much do you earn (daily or weekly or monthly)?

11- What are the main problems you face in your work?

*[Questions related to the wife]*

12- When did you wife start working?

13- Who chose the type and the place of work? If it was the husband, why?

14- Did you help your wife collect her start-up capital?

*[for family enterprises]*

15- Who makes the decisions related to organisation of the business?

16- Is you wife's work important for the business?

17- Do you interfere with daily routine of your wife's work?

*[all]*

18- Do you help your wife with the problems she faces in her work?

## **II. Family budget and expenditure**

1- How do you organise your household finances?

2- Whose decision was it to adopt this pattern? Why?

3- Do you contribute to the household income? How much?

4- Who control the household income?

5- Who makes decisions regarding the household daily expenditure?

6- Who makes the decisions regarding large expenditure?

7- Who is responsible for daily/weekly shopping (food)?

8- Do you know how much your wife earns?

9- Does your wife know how much you earn?

10- Does your wife contribute to the household income?  
How much?

11- Who spends on the following items

Item	You	Your husband	Both of you
Food			
Cloths			
Rent			
Electricity			
Children's needs			
Children's education			
Healthcare and medication			
Other (specify)			

12- Are there any other members of you family who work?  
Do they contribute to household income?

13- Do you take personal spending money? How much? How do you spend it?



14- Describe your normal working day

### III. Domestic work and childcare

1- For how long have you been married?

2- Are you satisfied with the number of children you currently have? Do (did) you want more children? Explain.

3- Do you help your wife with domestic work?

[if yes]

5- What do you do?

6- Do you help your wife with childcare? If yes, what do you do?

7- How do you see your role regarding disciplining the children? Planning their future?

### IV. Opinion Questions

1- Which is better for women, to work or to stay at home?

2- Do you approve of your wife's work? Why?

3- Do you think your wife's work is important for the family? How?

4- Would the family be negatively affected if your wife stopped work?

5- In your opinion, what are the roles for men and women in the family?

6- Do you think the man should have the supreme authority over his family? Why?

7- How do you describe a man who beats his wife? What are the likely reasons?

## Residence Questions

Served for wives and husbands

1- For how long have you lived in Cairo?

2- Since when you have been living in this house?

### I. Type

- 1- independent House
- 3- shared apartment
- 5- other (specify)

- 2- independent apartment
- 4- room

### II. Utilities

- 1- running water
- 3- public sewerage
- 5- private toilette

- 2- electricity
- 4- private sewerage
- 6- other (specify)

### III. Tenancy type

- 1- ownership (bought)
- 3- yearly rent
- 5- other (specify)

- 2- own built
- 4- monthly rent

### IV. Size of residence

- 1- number of rooms
- 2- fixtures

### V. Equipment

- 1- radio /cassette
- 3- VCR
- 5- refrigerator
- 7- washing machine
- 9- air condition

- 2- TV, B/W or coloured
- 4- fan
- 6- gas oven / stove
- 8- telephone
- 10- car

## **APPENDIX III**

### **ORIGINAL FIELDWORK QUESTIONNAIRES (in Arabic)**

## استبيان المرأة العاملة

رقم الاستمارة

--	--	--

المنطقة

\_\_\_\_\_

العنوان

\_\_\_\_\_

التاريخ

\_\_\_\_\_

ملاحظات

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## الإستبيان

### المرأة العاملة

اولا . البيانات الشخصية:

١- الاسم:

--	--

٢- السن:

--	--

٣- الحالة الاجتماعية:

(٠١) غير متزوجه

(٠٢) متزوجه

(٠٣) مطلقة

(٠٤) أرمله

--	--

٤- المستوى التعليمي:

(٠١) أميه

(٠٢) تقرأ وتكتب

(٠٣) ذهبت الى المدرسه لاقل من خمس سنوات

(٠٤) ذهبت الى المدرسه لاكثر من خمس سنوات

--	--

٥- مكان عمل المرأة:

(٠١) داخل المنزل

(٠٢) خارج المنزل

--	--

٦ - هل تعملين:

(٠١) لنفسك

(٠٢) مع زوجك

(٠٣) أقاربك

(٠٤) أغراب

(٠٥) أخرى (حدد)

٧- نوع العمل الذي تؤديه:

--	--

١. الانتاج المنزلي:

(٠١) خياطة و شغل ابرة

(٠٢) صناعات صغيرة حرف يدويه

(٠٣) طهي الطعام

(٠٤) تربية الدواجن

(٠٥) خدمات للآخرين

(٠٦) تدريس

--	--

ب. التجاره الصغيره (petty-trader): (بالنسبه لنوع المواد التي

تبيعها)

(٠٧) الخضراوات

(٠٨) بيع الاطعمه المطبوخه

(٠٩) بيع المواد غير الغذائيه (الجرايد، الالعاب، السجائر...الخ)

(١٠) بيع الفراخ

(١١) بيع العيش

(١٢) خدمات للآخرين

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٨- كم سنة تعملين في عملك الحالي

أقل من خمس سنوات

(١٣) ٥-١٠ سنوات

(١٤) ١١-١٥ سنة

(١٥) ١٦-٢٠ سنة

(١٦) ٢٠-٢٥ سنة

(١٧) أكثر من ٢٥ سنة

٩- الاطفال (ان وجد)

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١. العدد

ب. العمر

العمر	عدد الأطفال
١ أقل من خمس سنوات	
٢ من ٥-١٠ سنوات	
٣ من ١١-١٥ سنة	
٤ أكثر من ١٥ سنة	

[إذا كان لدى المبحوثة أبناء يذهبون الى المدارس او يعملون تستكمل المعلومات]

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ج. هل لديك :

(٠١) أبناء يذهبون الى المدارس

(٠٢) أبناء يعملون

(٠٣) كل ما سبق

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١٠ - معلومات عن الزوج (ان وجد)

١- المستوى التعليمي للزوج (أو الأخ في حالة غير المتزوجات)

(٠١) امي

(٠٢) يقرأ و يكتب



(٠٣) ذهب الى المدارس لإقل من خمس سنوات

(٠٤) ذهب الى المدارس لأكثر من خمس سنوات

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ب- مهنة الزوج (أو الأب في حالة غير المتزوجات)

(٠١) العماله غير الماهره (بواب، عامل نظافة، بائع جوال...الخ)

(٠٢) العماله متوسطة المهاره (العامل الميكانيكي، عامل البناء، كمساري...الخ)

(٠٣) العماله الماهره ( اسطى، حرفي، نساج، خياط، المرمم أو يصلح الأشياء...الخ)

(٠٤) موظف حكومي

(٠٥) عاطل عن العمل [أو يعمل لفترات و يتوقف لآخرى]

## ثانياً: المقياس

١. العمل:

من الذي يتخذ القرار بشأن... [الرجل قد يكون زوج، أخ، أبن... الخ]

الرقم	السؤال	الرجل (١)	معا (٢)	أنت (٣)
١	البدء بهذا العمل			
٢	مكان ممارسة العمل			
٣	إيقاع العمل (من حيث الساعات، الايام... الخ)			
٤	القرارات اليومية المتعلقة بالعمل			
٥	تنظيم العمل (مكان العمل، من يساعد في اداءه)			
٦	المفاوضات مع المورد او الزبائن			
٧	القرارات التي تتعلق بالامور المالية بالنسبة لعملك			

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٨- هل يتدخل زوجك في عملك؟

(٠١) دائماً

(٠٢) ابداً

(٠٣) احياناً

ب. الدخول:

هل تحتاجين لإذن من زوجك ل...

الرقم	السؤال	دائماً (١)	احياناً (٢)	ابداً (٣)
١	إذا اردت شراء شيء لنفسك			
٢	لشراء اشياء لاولادك			
٣	لتأخذي مصروف شخصي من دخلك			
٤	لاقراض احد اقاربك او الاصدقاء بعض المال			
٥	للدخول في جمعية			

ج. مصاريف المنزل و العمل المتزلي:

من الذي يقرر بشأن...

الرقم	السؤال	الرجل (١)	معا (٢)	انت (٣)
١	ميزانية الاسره			
٢	المصاريف اليوميه للمنزل			
٣	شراء بعض الاشياء الكبيره مثل ثلاجه او قطعة اثاث			

هل....

الرقم	السؤال	دائماً (٣)	أحياناً (٢)	أبداً (١)
٤	يساعدك زوجك في عمل المنزل			
٥	يساعدك زوجك في رعاية اطفالكما			

د. حرية الحركه و المظهر الشخصي:

هل تحتاجين لاذن من زوجك ل...

الرقم	السؤال	دائماً (١)	أحياناً (٢)	أبداً (٣)
١	زيارة اهلك او صديقاتك أو الجيران			
٢	استقبال زوار في البيت (سواء اهل او اصدقاء)			
٣	الخروج مع صديقاتك مثلاً للتسوق			

من الذي يقرر بشأن...

الرقم	السؤال	الرجل (١)	معا (٢)	انت (٣)
٤	ما تلبسين			
٥	لبسك للحجاب*			

\* اذا كانت المبحوثة محجبه

هـ. تنظيم الاسره وتربية الاولاد

من الذي ياخذ القرارات بشأن ...

الرقم	السؤال	الرجل (١)	انتما معا (٢)	انت (٣)
١	حجم العائلة (عدد الاطفال)			
٢	نوع الوسيله المستخدمه لمنع الحمل*			
٣	تعليم الاطفال او دخولهم سوق العمل			
٤	تربية الاطفال			

\* تسأل المبحوثة اذا كانت تستخدم وسيله لمنع الحمل

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٥- هل تعتقدين أن الرجل له الحق في ضرب المرأة؟

(٠١) نعم

(٠٢) لا

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٦- هل يضربك زوجك؟

(٠١) نعم

(٠٢) لا

## استمارة مقابلات المرأة العاملة

رقم الاستمارة

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الاسم \_\_\_\_\_

المطقة \_\_\_\_\_

العنوان \_\_\_\_\_

التاريخ \_\_\_\_\_

ملاحظات \_\_\_\_\_

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اولا. العمل: \_\_\_\_\_

١- هل هذا عملك الاول؟ [اذا كان الجواب بالنفي تسأل المبحوثه السوالين ٣،٢]

٢- ماذا كنت تعملين قبل هذا العمل؟

٣- لماذا غيرت عملك السابق؟

٤- هل تعملين اعمال اخرى بجانب عملك الحالي؟ [اذا كان الجواب نعم، فما هي هذه الاعمال]

٥- متى بدأت هذا العمل؟

٦- لماذا اخترت هذا النوع من العمل؟ ومكانه؟ ولماذا؟

٧- لحساب من تعملين ( لنفسك، لزوجك، لعائلتك، لغير الاقارب)؟ كيف بدأت العمل (المهارات)

٨- كيف حصلت عل رأس المال اللازم لهذا العمل؟

[اذا كانت المبحوثه قد اقترضت المال يسأل السؤال التالي]

٩- ممن اقترضت المال (الزوج، البك، اقارب، جيران، اصدقاء)؟

١٠- كم من الوقت تقضين في عملك (ساعات في اليوم/ وايام في الاسبوع)؟

١١- هل تعملين طوال السه ام تتوقفين لبعض الوقت؟ [اذا كان الجواب نعم] لماذا؟

١٢- هل يساعدك أحد في عملك ؟ [ إذا كان الجواب نعم ] من و كم من الوقت يقضون في ذلك؟

[إذا كان الزوج يساعد في العمل يسأل السؤال التالي]

١٣- كيف يساعدك ؟ [التركيز على الدور الذي يلعبه الزوج في عملها]

١٤- ما هي التكاليف التي تتحملها من عملك ؟ و كم تدفعين تقريبا؟

مواد خام

إيجار

مواصلات

فائده على قرض

ادوات ان وجد

غير ذلك [حدد]

١٥- من المسؤول الاساسي عن هذا العمل؟

[بالنسبة للطريقه التي يتم بها تنظيم العمل]

١٦- بالنسبة للعاملات في الانتاج المتري:

كيف تحصلين على المواد الخام، و كيف يتم تسويق المنتج، من هم زبائنك و كيف تتعاملين معهم؟ من يتخذ قرارات العمل

١٧- بالنسبة للبائعات:

كيف تحصلين على مواد للبيع، وكيف تتعاملين مع الموردين، كيف تختارين مكان البيع، من هم زبائنك و كيف تتعاملين معهم؟

١٨- ما هي المشاكل التي تواجهها في عملك؟

١٩- ما هو مقدار الدخل الذي يوفره لك عملك (يومية، اسوعيا، شهريا)؟

ثانيا. ميزانية العائلة والمصاريف اليومي:

١- من الذي يقرر كيف يتم تنظيم الميزانيه؟

٢- كيف يتم تنظيم ميزانية الاسره (تضيفين دخلك لدخل زوجك، تعطين زوجك دخلك كله او جزءا منه، زوجك يعطيك مصروف

اسبوعي او شهري أو يومي لمستلزمات المنزل، يصرف كلا منكما دخله على اشياء مختلفه \حددي؟

٣- هل تشعرين بالرضى عن الطريقه التي تتبعونها في تنظيم الميزانيه و لماذا؟

٤- من الذي يتحكم بدخل الاسره؟ هل لك حرية التصرف؟

٥- من الذي يتخذ القرارات بشأن المصاريف اليوميه للأسره؟

٦- من الذي يقرر بشأن المشتريات الكبيره للأسره (اثاث، غساله...الخ)؟

٧- من المسئول عن التسوق اليومي او الاسبوعي للأسره (الخضار، العيش...الخ)؟ و هل المبلغ المخصص لهذه الاحتياجات ثابت؟

٨- هل تعرفين كم هو دخل زوجك؟

٩- هل يعرف زوجك كم تكسبين من عملك؟

١٠- هل يأخذ زوجك مصروف شخصي؟ و هل تعرفين كيف ينفقه؟

١١- هل يساهم زوجك في مصاريف الاسره؟ فيما وكم يدفع تقريبا؟

١٢- من الذي ينفق على الاحتياجات التاليه:

الاحتياجات	انت	زوجك	انتم الاثنين معا
الطعام			
الملابس			
الايجار			



الكهرباء			
احتياجات الاطفال			
نفقات تعليم الاطفال			
العلاج و الادويه			
غير ذلك [حدد]			

١٣- هل في اسرتك افراد يعملون ؟ و هل يساهمون في دخل الاسره؟ كم؟

١٤- كم تساهمين بدخل الأسرة

١٥- هل تأخذين مصروف شخصي من دخلك؟ [إذا كان الجواب نعم] ماذا تشتريين (أو تفعلين) به؟

١٦- ماذا تفعلين إذا اردت شراء شئ ولم يوافق زوجك؟

ثالثاً. العمل المنزلي و الاسره:

١- كم سنه مضت على زواجك؟

٢- هل كنت تعملين قبل الزواج؟ [إذا كان الجواب نعم] هل توقفت عن العمل بعد الزواج؟

٣- بعد انجابك هل توقفت عن العمل او غيرت عملك و لماذا؟

[ال المطلوب هو محاولة رسم جدول للاعمال المنزليه التي تعملها المرأة سواء يوميا او اسبوعيا]

٤- ما هي الاعمال التي تعملها كل يوم في المنزل؟

٥- و ما هي الاعمال التي تعملها اسبوعيا؟

٦- هل بإمكانك وصف يوم من ايام عملك وليكن اليوم السابق؟

٧- هل يساعدك احد من افراد اسرتك في اعمال المنزل؟ وهل يساعدك زوجك؟ ماهي أنواع المساعدة التي يقدمها؟

٨- كيف تقسمين وقتك بين العمل المنزلي و شغلك؟ [كيف يتم تنظيم الوقت ]

[في حال وجود اطفال دون الخامسة]

٩- من يعتني بالاطفال اثناء انشغالك بالعمل؟ هل يساعدك زوجك؟ وماذا يفعل؟

١٠- من المسئول عن تربية الأبناء؟ وتقرير مستقبلهم؟ ولماذا؟

١١- هل (كنت) ترغبين في المزيد من الأولاد؟ من الذي قرر عدد الأولاد، ولماذا؟

رابعاً. العلاقات الاجتماعية التي تصادفها المرأة: وحرية الحركة

١. بالنسبة للعاملات في الانتاج المنزلي:

١- هل هناك من يساعدك من الاقارب خارج الاسره؟ من و كيف؟

٢- عندما تصادفك مشكله ما لم تلجأين لحلها؟ (سواء ماديه او حياتيه)

٣- هل يأتي اقاربك لزيارتك؟ كل متى تقريباً؟

٤- هل لك صديقات ؟ ماذا تفعلن معا [ تتزاورن، تذهبن للتسوق...الخ]؟

٥- إلى أين تذهبين دون أن تحتاجي لأذن من زوجك؟

٦- بالنسبة لزيارتك، هل تذهبين اليهم ام يأتيون اليك؟ و كيف علاقتك بهم؟

٧- بالنسبة لعلاقتك مع جاراتك هل هناك: زيارات، تقدم خدمات، تقدم معونات ..الخ؟

٨- هل تعرفين نساء أحرىات تعملن في نفس مهنتك؟ ما هي علاقتك بمن؟

٩- كيف تتعاملين مع الموردين؟ و هل تواجهين أي مشاكل في التعامل معهم؟

٢. بالنسبة للبائعه:

١- هل يأتي أقاربك لزيارتك؟ كل متى تقريبا؟

٢- بالنسبة لعلاقتك مع حاراتك هل هناك: زيارات، تقدم خدمات او معونات... الخ؟

٣- إلى أين تذهين دون أن تحتاجي لأذن من زوجك؟

٤- كيف تتعاملين مع زميلاتك في المهه؟

٥- هل لك صديقات من بينهم؟ او متاكل في التعامل معهم؟

٦- عندما بدأت العمل هل ساعدك احد او وجهك لطريقة العمل؟ من؟

٧- كيف تتعاملين مع الرجال في السوق؟ و هل تواجهين مشاكل معهم؟

٨- اذا صادفتك مشاكل في عملك فلن تلجأين ليسانعك في حلها؟

٩- كيف تتعاملين مع تجار الجملة ؟ و هل تصادفين أي مشاكل معهم؟

١٠- هل تواجهين أي مشاكل مع البلديـه او الشرطه؟ ما نوعية هذه المشاكل؟ و كيف تتعاملين معها؟

خامساً. اسئلة الرأي:

١- أيهما افضل للمرأة ان تعمل او ان تبقى في البيت و لماذا؟ لماذا تعملين أنت؟

٢- هل تحبين عملك ولماذا؟ لو كان لك خيار فهل تختارين عمل اخر وما هو؟ (ماذا يعني العمل لها)

٣- هل عملك مهم لاسرتك وكيف؟ هل هو يمثل اهمية عمل زوجك؟

٤- لو توقفت عن العمل هل سيضر ذلك بوضع اسرتك؟

٥- هل احتجت موافقة زوجك على عملك؟ لو لم يوافق ماذا كنت ستفعلين؟

٦- لو كان زوجك قادرا على اعادة اسرتك لوحده هل تتركين العمل و لماذا؟

٧- برأيك ما هو دور كلا من الرجل و المرأة في البيت؟

٨- لماذا قررت ارتداء الحجاب؟ (في حالة المحجبات)

٩- هل ترين ان للرجل حق التحكم بالاسره و لماذا؟

١٠- هل أثر عملك على مكانتك بالأسرة؟

١١- ما رأيك بالرجل الذي يضرب زوجته؟ ما سبب تعرض الزوجة للضرب؟ ماذا بالنسبة لك؟

## استمارة مقابلات الأزواج

رقم الاستمارة

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الاسم \_\_\_\_\_

المطقة \_\_\_\_\_

العنوان \_\_\_\_\_

التاريخ \_\_\_\_\_

ملاحظات \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**اولا. العمل:**

١- ما نوع العمل الذى تؤديه؟ و منذ متى و انت تعمل في هذا العمل؟

٢- هل غيرت عملك ؟ اذا كان الجواب نعم لماذا؟

٣- هل تعمل اعمال اخرى بجانب عملك الحالي؟ [اذا كان الجواب نعم، فما هي هذه الاعمال]

٤- الحساب من تعمل ( لنفسك، لعائلتك، لغير الاقارب)؟

[المز يعمل لحساب نفسه]

٥- كيف حصلت عل رأس المال اللازم لهذا العمل؟

٦- هل يساعدك افراد من اسرتك في عملك؟ من وماذا يعملون؟

[الجميع]

٧- كم من الوقت تقضي في عملك (ساعات في اليوم\ وايام في الاسبوع)؟

٨- ماذا تفعل عادة بعد انتهاء عملك؟

٩- هل تعمل لوال السنه ام تتوقف لبعض الوقت؟ [اذا كان يتوقف عن العمل] لماذا؟

١٠- ما هو مقدار الدخل الذي يوفره لك عملك (يومية، اسبوعيا، شهريا)؟

١١- ما هي المشاكل التي تواجهها في عملك؟

[اسئلہ تتعلق بعمل الزوجہ]

١٢- متى بدأت زوجتك بالعمل؟

١٣- من الذي اختار نوع عملها ومكانه؟ [إذا كان الزوج] لماذا؟

١٤- هل ساعدت زوجتك في الحصول على المال اللازم لبداية العمل؟ وكيف تم ذلك؟

في حلة مشروع الأسرة

١٥- هل تتدخل في كيفية تنظيم عمل زوجتك في المراحل المختلفة؟

[بالنسبة للعاملات في الإنتاج المنزلي: الحصول على المواد الخام، التسويق للمنتج، التعامل مع الزبائن... الخ  
بالنسبة للبائعات: الحصول على مواد للبيع، التعامل مع الموردين، اختيار مكان العمل، البيع... الخ]

١٦- من المسئول عن تنظيم العمل؟

١٧- هل تتدخل في عمل زوجتك من حيث ساعات عملها او مكانه؟

١٨- اذا واجهت زوجتك مشاكل في عملها هل تساعدنا في حلها؟ وكيف؟

ثانياً. ميزانية العائلة والمصاريف اليومية:

١- كيف يتم تنظيم ميزانية الاسره (تصيف دخلك لدخل زوجتك، تعطي زوجتك دخلك كله او جزءا منه، تعطي زوجتك مصروف اسبوعي او شهري او يومي لمستلزمات المنزل، يصرف كلا منكما دخله على اشياء مختلفه حدد؟)

٢- من الذي يقرر كيف يتم تنظيم الميزانيه؟ ولماذا؟

٣- هل تساهم في مصاريف الاسره؟ فيما وما هو مقدار ما تدفعه من دخلك؟

٤- من الذي يتحكم بدخل الاسره؟

٥- من الذي تحد القرارات بشأن المصاريف اليومية للأسره؟

٦- من الذي يقرر بشأن المشتريات الكبيره للأسره (اثاث، غساله..الخ)؟

٧- من المسئول عن التسوق اليومي او الاسبوعي للأسره (الخضار، العيش..الخ)؟ و هل المبلغ المخصص لهذه الاحتياجات ثابت؟

٨- هل تعرف كم هو دخل زوجتك؟

٩- هل تعرف زوجتك كم تكسب من عملك؟

١٠- هل تساهم زوجتك في ميزانية الاسره؟ وما هو مقدار مساهمتها؟

١١- من الذي ينفق على الاحتياجات التاليه:

الاحتياجات	انت	زوجك	انتم الاثنين معا
الطعام			
الملابس			
الانجار			
الكهرباء			
احتياجات الاطفال			
نفقات تعليم الاطفال			
العلاج و الادويه			
غير ذلك [حدد]			

١٢- هل في اسرتك افراد يعملون ويساهمون في دخل الاسره؟

١٣- اذا كان الجواب نعم فمن هم؟ و بكم يساهمون؟



١٤- هل تأخذ مصروف شخصي من دخلك؟ [إذا كان الجواب نعم] ماذا تفعل به؟

ثالثاً. العمل المتولي والأسره:

١- كم مضى على زواجك؟

٢- كم عدد افراد الاسره؟ و من يسكن معكم في المنزل و لماذا؟

٣- هل تستطيع وصف جدول ليوم من ايام عملك؟

٤- هل تساعد زوجتك في اعمال المنزل؟

[إذا كان الجواب نعم يسأل السؤال التالي]

٥- في أي الاعمال تساعد: طهي الطعام\ تنظيف المنزل\ التسوق\ غسل الملابس\ غير ذلك حدد؟

٦- هل تساعد في رعاية الأطفال؟ ماذا تفعل؟

٧- ماهو دورك في تربية الأطفال وتحديد مستقبلهم؟

رابعاً. اسئله رأي:

١- أيهما افضل للمرأة ان تعمل او ان تبقى في البيت و لماذا؟

٢- هل توافق على عمل زوجتك؟ ولماذا؟

٣- هل تعتقد ان عمل زوجتك مهم لاسرتك وكيف؟(حسن من وضع الاسره)

٤- لو توقفت زوجتك عن العمل هل سيضر ذلك بوضع اسرتك؟

٥- رأيك ما هو دور كلا من الرجل و المرأة في البيت؟

٦- هل تعتقد ان للرجل حق التحكم بالاسره و لماذا؟

٧- ما رأيك بالرجل الذي يضرب زوجته؟ ما أسباب ذلك؟

## أسئلة تتعلق بالسكن

### تم استقصاءها مع الزوجات والأزواج

١- مد متى وانت تعيشين (تعيش) في القاهرة؟ ومن أين انت اصلا؟

٢- منذ كم سنة وانت تسكنين (تسكن) في هذا المسكن؟

أولاً- النوع:

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| ١- منزل مستقل | ٢- شقة مستقلة |
| ٣- شقة مشتركة | ٤- غرفة       |
| ٥- أخرى تذكر  |               |

ثانياً - المرافق:

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| ١- مياه جارئة     | ٢- كهرباء          |
| ٣- صرف صحي        | ٤- صرف خارج الشبكة |
| ٥- دورة مياه خاصة | ٦- أخرى تذكر       |

ثالثاً- نوع الخيارة:

- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| ١- ملك بالشراء | ٢- مشيد. معروفي |
| ٣- ايجار سوي   | ٤- ايجار شهري   |
| ٥- أخرى تذكر   |                 |

رابعاً- مساحة البيت:

- |              |
|--------------|
| ١- عدد العرف |
| ٢- المرافق   |

خامساً- الأجهزة المنزلية:

- |                |                               |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| ١- راديو كاسيت | ٢- تلفزيون ابيض واسود او ملون |
| ٣- فيديو       | ٤- مروحة                      |
| ٥- ثلاجة       | ٦- بوتاجاز                    |
| ٧- غسالة       | ٨- تلفون                      |
| ٩- جهاز تكييف  | ١٠- سيارة                     |

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